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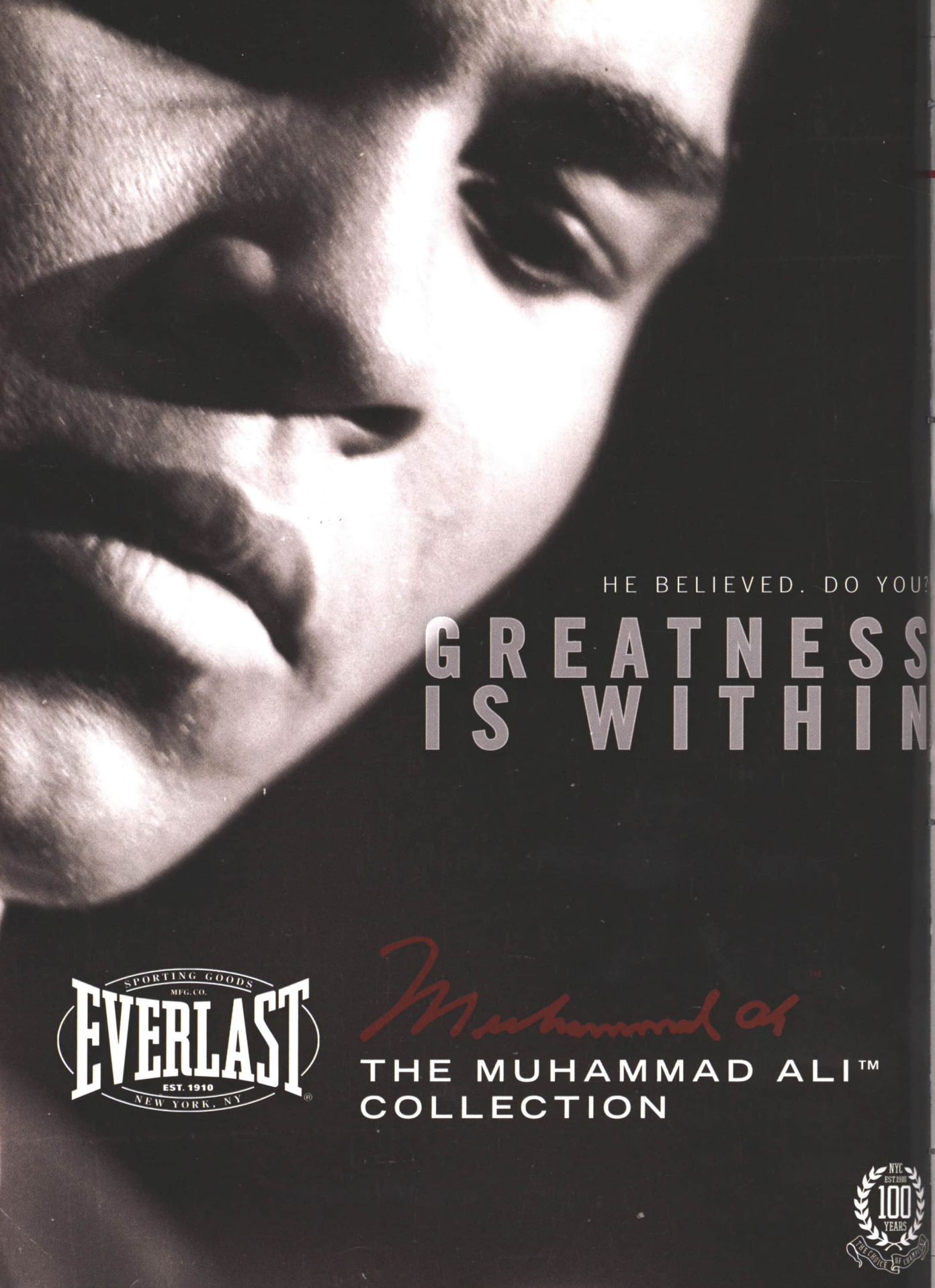

name, image and likeness of Muhammad Ali is used with permission of Muhammad Ali Enterprises LLC. THE GREATEST OF ALL TIME and MUHAMMAD

Volume 88, No. 12 November 2009

The RING

Legend At The Crossroads

It was late August, and just climbing the flight of stairs that leads to Andy Carr's second-floor gym was enough to work up a sweat. The gym is located in back of the Upper Darby firehouse in a gritty blue-collar neighborhood just beyond the fringe of West Philly, and THE RING crew was there to photograph the next five installments of "Prefect Execution," Bernard Hopkins' monthly instructional column.

Nothing lasts forever, but when it comes to Hopkins you can't help but wonder if he's found a way to duck Father Time's scythe and knock the sand out of his hourglass with a counter right.

During the course of the 2½-hour session, he tirelessly demonstrated fundamental moves with precision and grace. His mind and muscle memory working as one, as he made the difficult look easy, all the while keeping up a running dialogue. At one point, B-Hop took a break to lean over the ropes and run down a list of fighters who were never the same after sharing a ring with him.

Anybody who thinks this 44-year-old is ready to hang up his gloves doesn't understand the fighter's mindset.

Of course, Hopkins hasn't fought since he schooled middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik last October, a brilliant performance that undoubtedly has something to do with his prolonged inactivity. If you're only as good as your last fight, then Hopkins might have been too good for his own good.

"After the Pavlik fight, I told him that the old-man talk isn't going to work," said Hopkins' trainer, Naazim Richardson. "Nobody's gonna be fooled by that stuff anymore."

But that's only half the story. Sure, some fighters who were eager to get a piece of Hopkins after the loss to Joe Calzaghe are now having second thoughts. But Hopkins eagerness to keep fighting is tempered by his financial demands.

You can't blame young bucks for not wanting to risk being embarrassed the way Pavlik was for short money, and you can't blame one of the game's major stars for wanting the lion's share of the purse. It is a dilemma that has already left Hopkins idle for almost a year.

Hopkins insists that HBO has reserved a January 2010 date for him, which the network hopes to hype as a Foremanesque attempt to win a title at the age of 45. Although a lot of the details are different, the storyline is close enough to sell.

Who will be in the other corner remained an open question when this issue went to press, as all interested parties were still playing the elaborate game of chicken that passes for negotiations in the boxing world.

It could be cruiserweight champion Tomasz Adamek or the winner of the Chad Dawson-Glen Johnson November rematch. If neither of those two matches can be made for whatever reason, don't be surprised if Golden Boy Promotions reaches out for Zsolt Erdei, who holds the WBO 175-pound trinket.

Fighting Erdei would be a major comedown compared to either of the aforementioned world championship fights. Even so, it would probably still satisfy the corporate suits that hold the purse strings. And don't forget that GBP and Erdei's promoter, Universum, recently formed what they called a "strategic alliance."

Regardless of how it plays out, "The Executioner's" endgame has begun. But like so many before him, Hopkins is unlikely to quit until somebody gives him a bad beating—and 56 fights and more than 20 years into a Hall of Fame career, that hasn't happened yet.

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[Opening Shot]

GOAT Cart

Although it might look like he's being bused in from the bullpen, the Greatest Of All-Time has not launched a new career as a relief pitcher. Instead, Muhammad Ali was at Yankee Stadium on August 6, where he was honored with the Six-Star Diamond Award from the American Academy of Hospitality Sciences before a baseball game between the New York Yankees and the Boston Red Sox.

PHOTO BY PAUL BERESWILL/GETTY IMAGES

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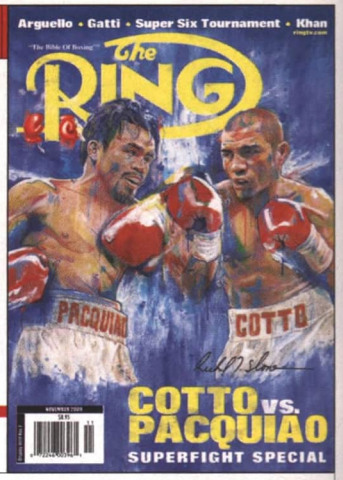

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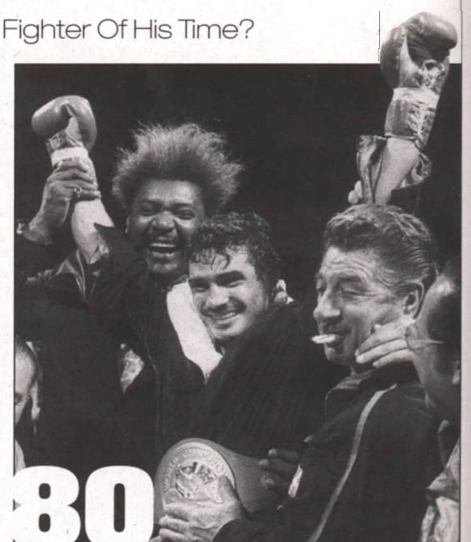

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PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

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Vernon Forrest, 1971-2009

The last thing anyone expected to hear about Vernon Forrest was that he'd been killed in the streets of Atlanta after a gun-battle. But late in the evening of July 25, as he put air in the tires of his Jaguar at a Southwest Atlanta Chevron station, 38-year-old Forrest found himself being robbed at gunpoint. According to police reports, Forrest revealed his own gun and pursued the robber on foot, firing once. After giving up the chase, Forrest encountered a second man. Inexplicably, Forrest was shot several times in the back and pronounced dead at the scene. Since then, one suspect (Demario Ware) has turned himself in; two more (Charman Sinkfield and Jquante Crews) have been arrested.

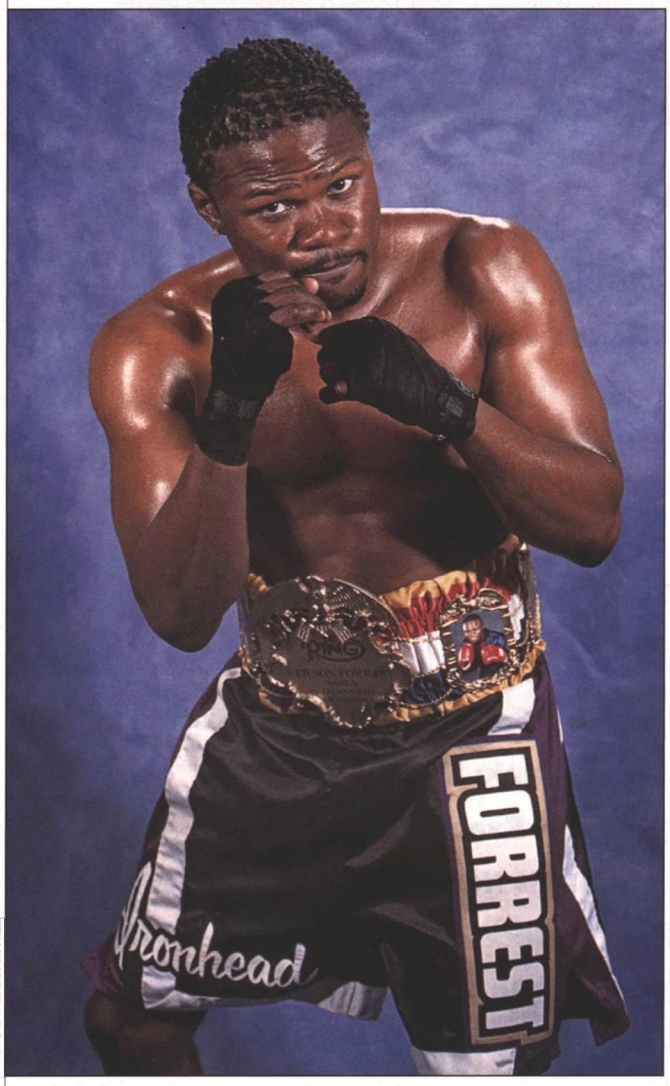


PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

"The Viper" in his prime

Forrest, a former world welterweight champion, leaves behind a son, Vernon Jr., who along with many other people may question Forrest's reckless behavior on the last night of his life. Much goes through a man's mind when he's being robbed: fear, disbelief, anger, and embarrassment. Add to this the feisty nature of a man who fights for his living, and Forrest's actions make a little more sense. Still, the murder of Vernon Forrest shouldn't be bundled with other sordid tales of athletes and guns. Forrest wasn't just another thug who'd wandered into professional sports through the back door. He was different.

Born in Augusta, Georgia, Forrest, 41-3 (29), was a member of the same 1992 Olympic team that brought Oscar De La Hoya into prominence. Known as "The Viper," Forrest was a classy, methodical boxer with a masterful left jab and a right hand that hissed through the air like a meat cleaver. He emerged as a major star in 2002 by scoring consecutive wins over Shane Mosley, the first of which earned Forrest the welterweight championship.

But it was after watching an autistic youngster struggle to tie his shoes that Forrest helped create Destiny's Child Inc., a series of group homes for the mentally challenged. Forrest told *The New York Times* in 2002, "The people I work with have been abused and neglected. These are the people that society turned their back on. Everybody needs help and everybody needs love."

At times he seemed more comfortable among his "special people," than before television cameras or the press. Many referred to his humanitarian work as his true calling.

'"We teach mathematics and how to count money," Forrest told *The Times* in 2003. '"We had this one 18-year-old boy to whom all money looked the same. He had trouble with quarters and nickels. Then one day, he said, 'Uncle Vernon, I got it, I got it.'"

In 2005, after injuries had sidelined him for two years, Forrest mounted a comeback that culminated in a win over Carlos Baldomir for the vacant WBC junior middleweight title. After splitting a pair of fights with Sergio Mora in 2008, Forrest was hoping for a fight with Sergio Martinez. A rib injury not only delayed negotiations for that bout, but also caused the WBC to strip Forrest of the title.

That kind of bad luck cropped up throughout Forrest's career. He came down with a stomach virus the night before his opening bout at the Barcelona Olympics, which contributed to his being eliminated; his first title shot in the pro ranks came against IBF titlist Raul Frank, and ended when a headbutt cut turned the bout into a no-contest; Forrest won the rematch, but it was a dull fight and viewers weren't impressed. Then, after beating Mosley and earning

THE RING's 2002 Fighter of The Year award, Forrest suffered a shocking knockout loss to Ricardo Mayorga. Forrest boxed well in the rematch, but Mayorga walked away with a controversial majority decision victory. Then came the problems with his left arm that cost Forrest what would've been his prime years. The loss to Mora continued the tone of Forrest's career, which was one of steady progress marred by disconcerting setbacks.

The one night where everything went right was on January 26, 2002, at The Madison Square Garden Theater. On that night, bad luck relented so Forrest could treat Mosley to a command performance. On that night, Forrest was as brilliant as any fighter has ever been, dropping Mosley twice en route to a decision win. After the final bell, Forrest shouted defiantly at press row, "I told ya!"

The rematch six months later saw Forrest win again. This time, rather than heckle reporters, Forrest waded into the audience where people from the group homes were seated. They embraced him; he beamed. Perhaps without knowing—or maybe he did know—Forrest was sending us a message about success. Yes, it could be found in a boxing ring. But it could also come from teaching someone the difference between a quarter and a nickel.

—Don Stradley

PHOTO BY JESSE D. GARRABRANT/GETTY IMAGES

Forrest drills Mosley en route to welter title

Fighter In The Net

There was always something special about fighters that Ray Emery was able to identify with. He liked their moxie. The way they were able to withstand punishment and keep coming back. He liked the history of the sport—and knows it well.

It's why the new starting goaltender of the Philadelphia Flyers wears a different design on his helmet than other goaltenders in the National Hockey League. The Hamilton, Ontario-born 26-year-old wears boxing-themed illustrations. He's worn Muhammad Ali, Mike Tyson, Marvin Hagler, Jack Johnson, Floyd Mayweather, and former Canadian heavyweight contender George Chuvalo on his head.

"Boxing is a sport that I followed as a kid, I even took a few classes as a kid, and Tyson was in his prime when I was growing up," said Emery, known in the NHL for his feistiness. "I played hockey, but always felt close to the sport of boxing. There are a lot of similarities. It's about roughness and working your ass off. You have to have a never-say-die attitude and it's why I always admired someone like Chuvalo."

Chuvalo wasn't the most gifted fighter, Emery noted, but he was Canadian and he was tough, and each time someone was in the ring with him, they knew they were in a fight.

"That's me," Emery said. "It's also why I can't wait to play in Philly. The environment there is great. There is an energy and atmosphere that gets the adrenaline pumping. It's almost like you're getting into the ring and fighting."

Emery is going with Philadelphia boxing legends Bernard Hopkins and Joe Frazier on his helmet this year.

—Joseph Santoliquito

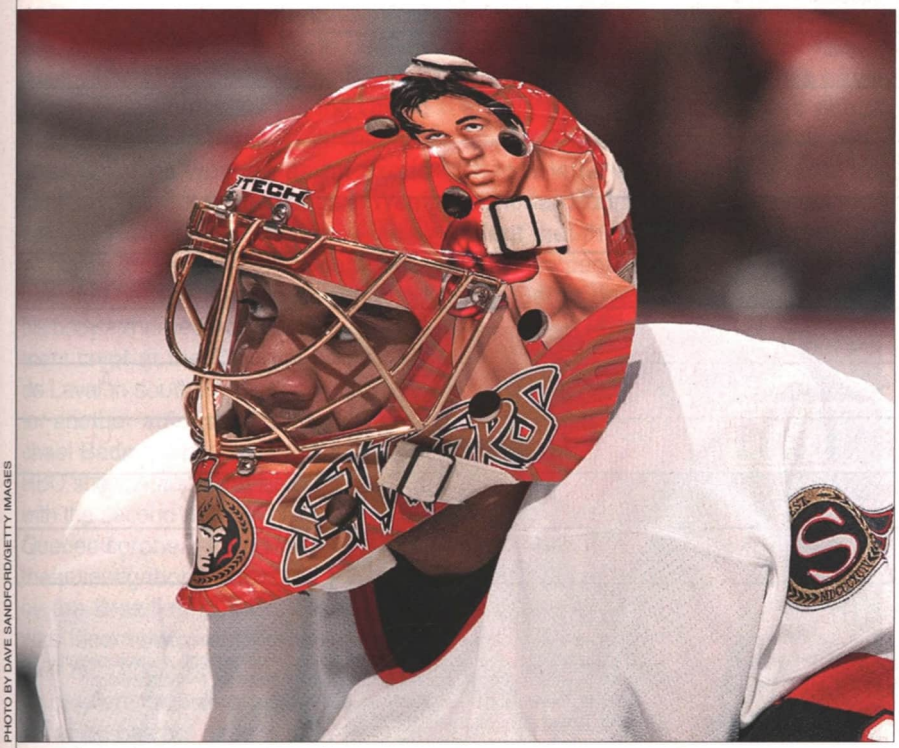


PHOTO BY DAVE SANDFORD/GETTY IMAGES

Emery sporting his Chuvalo helmet

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
07/30/09	Luis Ramos KO 6 Sandro Marcos *Young southpaw tames another trialhorse*	Versus	l	C	C	C
07/30/09	Derrick Wilson KO 1 Charles Huerta *Huerta first prospect to fall casualty in new series*	Versus	l	C	C	C+
07/31/09	Chris Avalos KO 2 Andre Wilson *19-year-old looks like a mature finisher already*	Showtime	b	C-	C	C+
07/31/09	Tyrone Harris KO 8 Marvin Quintero *Role reversal; boxer bangs out brawler*	Showtime	jl	C+	B	B
07/31/09	Derrick Rossy W 10 Carl Drummond *Rossy beats Drummond slowly*	ESPN2	h	C+	C+	C
07/31/09	Victor Cayo W 10 Julio Diaz *A marketing genius would add a "Y" to Cayo's first name*	ESPN2	jw	B	B	B
08/01/09	Devon Alexander KO 8 Junior Witter *Witter saves his worst performances for American TV*	Showtime	jw	B	B	D
08/01/09	Timothy Bradley NC 3 Nate Campbell *No butt about it, no-contest was right call after further review*	Showtime	jw	B+	B	F
08/07/09	Anthony Dirrell KO 7 Alfredo Contreras *Late substitute was short on talent*	ESPN2	sm	C+	C	C
08/07/09	Alfredo Angulo KO 2 Gabriel Rosado *"Perro's" bite is worse than his bark*	ESPN2	jm	B	B-	B
08/07/09	Deontay Wilder KO 1 Travis Allen *Allen was three chains away from being a heavy bag*	ESPN2	h	C-	F	D-
08/07/09	Vivian Harris NC 2 Noe Bolanos *Clash of heads calls Harris' resiliency into question*	ESPN2	jw	C+	C+	F
08/07/09	Antonio Pitalua KO 6 Jose Reyes *Could the fan in the 10th row please return Reye's head*	Telemundo	l	B-	B-	B+
08/15/09	Mark Melligen KO 4 Ernesto Zepeda *Aggressive Melligen could develop into fan favorite*	PPV	l	B-	C	C+
08/15/09	Anthony Peterson W 10 Luis Arceo *Yearlong layoff obviously affected Peterson's timing*	PPV	l	B-	C	C
08/15/09	Steven Luevano DQ 7 Bernabe Concepcion *Concepcion rings Luevano's bell after the bell*	PPV	l	B+	B	F
08/15/09	Nonito Donaire W 12 Rafael Concepcion *Donaire's flash a little less brilliant at a higher weight*	PPV	jb	A-	B-	B
08/15/09	Roy Jones KO 10 Jeff Lacy *Jones still knows how to pick opponents*	PPV	lh	B-	C+	C
08/15/09	Danny Green KO 5 Julio Cesar Dominguez *Jones-Green tickets were printed before the opening bell*	PPV	c	B-	C	C+
08/15/09	Jason Litzau KO 3 Verquan Kimbrough *Litzau wins and loses in the same exciting fashion*	PPV	l	C+	B-	B-
08/15/09	BJ Flores KO 4 Epifanio Mendoza *Is Flores a better boxing analyst or cruiserweight?*	PPV	c	C+	C	C
08/22/09	Humberto Gutierrez W 12 Sergey Gulyakevich *Bleeding and swollen Gutierrez survives late rally*	TV Azteca	jl	B-	B	B+
08/22/09	Raul Garcia W 12 Sammy Gutierrez *Mexican fans give standing ovation to classic*	TV Azteca	fl	A	B-	A
08/22/09	Daniel Jacobs W 10 Ishe Smith *The best blows landed after the bell*	HBO	jm	B-	B-	C+
08/22/09	Robert Guerrero W 12 Malcolm Klassen *Klassen obviously never saw **Ghostbusters***	HBO	jl	A	A-	B
08/22/09	Juan Diaz W 12 Paul Malignaggi *Texas-size robbery*	HBO	jw	B+	B	B

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Gatti's Death Remains A Mystery

Eighteen days after she was taken into custody on suspicion of murdering Arturo Gatti, Amanda Rodrigues, the fighter's widow, was released from prison on the orders of Judge Ildete Verissimo de Lima of the City of Recife.

Originally, Brazilian authorities theorized that Rodrigues, 23, strangled Gatti with her purse strap while he slept after a night of heavy drinking, but changed their mind following an autopsy and ruled that the ex-fighter had committed suicide.

"This case has been resolved," said police spokesperson Milena Saraiva. "While the evidence at the scene first led us to think Gatti was murdered, the autopsy results and a detailed crime scene analysis simply pointed to a different outcome."

Brazilian police announced that Gatti, 37, had hung himself from a staircase column more than seven feet off the ground using a handbag strap. Police said he stood on a stool and kicked it out from under him. The autopsy indicated Gatti might have been suspended for about three hours before his body fell to the floor.

The couple, along with their infant son, was vacationing in Porto de Galinhas when Gatti died. Rodrigues was born in Brazil, but moved to the United States in her late-teens. Gatti met her while she was working as an exotic dancer at The Squeeze Lounge in Weehawken, New Jersey.

Gatti's family and friends do not believe that he took his own life, and had his body exhumed from a cement crypt at the Cimetiere de Laval in southern Quebec for another autopsy. Dr. Michael Baden, who hosts the HBO show *Autopsy*, assisted with the second autopsy. The Quebec coroners found that the investigation conducted by the Brazilian authorities was incomplete, and while their own findings were also incomplete at press times, homicide has not been ruled out as a cause of death.

Dr. Baden told Mitch Abramson of the New York *Daily News* that there were a number of black and blue marks under Gatti's skin "due to blunt force trauma" and that a body does not get bruised to that extent in a suicidal hanging.

"I think that right now until we get more information, the homicide and suicide are both possibilities," said Dr. Baden.

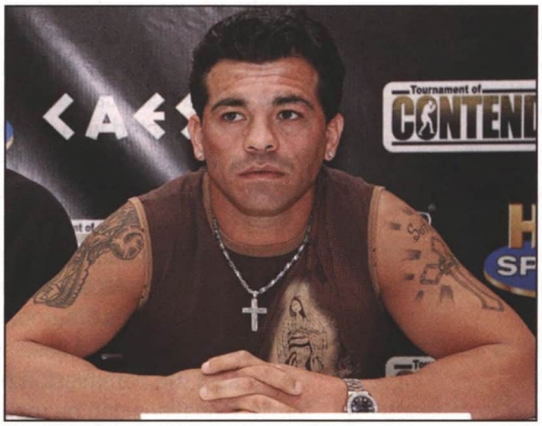
Those who believe that Rodrigues murdered Gatti point to his estate, which has been estimated to be in the $5-million range, as the motive. According to Gatti's lawyer, John Lynch, Gatti changed his will on July 17 to make Rodrigues the sole beneficiary.

Rodrigues, on the other hand, said that she thinks her husband probably killed himself because he was depressed.

"His family is saying that Arturo never had a depression problem or a drug problem, but he did," said Rodrigues. "I put him in rehab. He was doing drugs. Arturo had a hard time with retirement. I think they're just upset because they didn't get any money."

"She is trying to reverse the whole thing," said Pat Lynch, who managed Gatti's boxing career. "Arturo never was depressed and he didn't have a drug problem. Amanda was about money. That's all she was about."

In a letter sent to the *Journal de Montreal*, Rodrigues said she was confident that the second autopsy would convince people she had nothing to do with Gatti's death.



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Gatti at press conference in May 2007

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Outside the Ropes

According to the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, the **Nevada State Athletic Commission** voted unanimously to institute instant replay on a limited basis for boxing and MMA events. It would be used, solely at the discretion of the referee, to confirm a call, such as whether a punch or butt caused a cut, or if a foul was accidental or intentional. The new regulation must be approved by the Legislative Council Bureau and filed by the state's librarian. "We'll see how it works," said NSAC Executive Director **Keith Kizer**. "It's an additional tool for the referee, and that's a good thing" … The 910th Airlift Wing, stationed at the Youngstown Air Reserve Station in Ohio, has honored middleweight champion **Kelly Pavlik** by painting "Kelly 'The Ghost' Pavlik—the Pride of Youngstown" and the boxers "ghost with boxing gloves" artwork on the nose of a C-130H Hercules cargo transport. The history of painting "nose art" on aircrafts is a morale-boosting tradition that dates back to the early days of aviation. Senior Airman **Michael Kennedy** painted Pavlik's nose art … The Top Rank Gym in Las Vegas, which opened in 1989, closed its doors in mid-August, a victim of a weak economy. "It was strictly a business decision," said Top Rank Chairman **Bob Arum**. "It's very expensive to operate. With so few fighters using the gym and no Top Rank fighters, it was silly to stay open around the clock" … Live video streaming service **Ustream** is being sued by **Square Ring, Inc.,** a promotional company owed by **Roy Jones**. The lawsuit alleges that Ustream has committed "massive and blatant copyright infringement" by allowing 2,377 users to view the pay-per-view broadcast of the Jones-**Omar Sheika** fight free of charge … Trainer **Roger Mayweather** was arrested by the Las Vegas Metro Police and charged with coercion with force and battery strangulation following an alleged attack on female boxer **Melissa St. Vil**. According to the police report, officers answered a call at a private residence on August 2 and found Mayweather with his arms around St. Vil. He released her, and she began coughing and spitting blood. Paramedics described redness on St. Vil's throat and defensive wounds on Mayweather's face and head. St. Vil stated she hit Mayweather in the head with a lamp. She also said Mayweather had hit her in the ribs several times. Mayweather had trained St. Vil until about three month's prior to the incident … Boxing promoter **Barry Hughes** has been sentenced to 150 hours of community service for attacking a man at a nightclub in Glasgow, Scotland, in December 2008 … Author **Budd Schulberg**, 95, died of natural causes on August 5 at his home in Westhampton Beach, New York. His novel, *The Harder They Fall*, which focused on corruption in boxing and was loosely based on the career of former heavyweight champion **Primo Carnera**, was made into a movie in 1956, starring **Humphrey Bogart**. Schulberg was an early boxing editor at *Sports Illustrated* and wrote two nonfiction boxing books, *Loser And Still Champion: Muhammad Ali* (1972) and *Ringside: A Treasury Of Boxing Reportage* (2006). He also managed heavyweight **Archie McBride** in the late-1940s. Schulberg was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2003 … Panamanian junior featherweight **Jose "Maco" Arboleda**, 27, died on August 7 of injuries suffered the day before in a traffic accident in Panama City. The fighter was a passenger on a public transportation bus that rolled off the road and went over a cliff. Two other people died in the incident and 30 were injured. Arboleda's final fight was on February 21, 2009, against **Akifumi Shimoda** in Tokyo, Japan. The bout ended in technical draw in the third round, bringing Arboleda's pro record to 23-4-2 (9) … Heavyweight **Francisco "Poncho" Moncivais**, 21, died of head injuries suffered in a bout with **Bobby O'Bannon** on July 24 at the Hollywood Casino in Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi. Moncivais was ahead on two of the three official scorecards after three rounds, when O'Bannon, 6-2 (6), connected with a crushing combination to the head that put Moncivais down. Referee **Fred Steinwinder** immediately stopped the fight at the 1:39 mark, and the stricken fighter was rushed to Memorial Hospital in Gulfport, where he was pronounced dead 24 hours later. Moncivais, who had won two national titles as an amateur, made his pro debut on April 4, 2009, winning via first-round TKO. The O'Bannon fight was his second pro start. Mississippi Boxing Commissioner **Jon Lewis** said the commission has set up a fund for Moncivais' family. Donations can be mailed to: Poncho's Memorial Fund, P.O. Box 720820, Byram, Mississippi 39272.

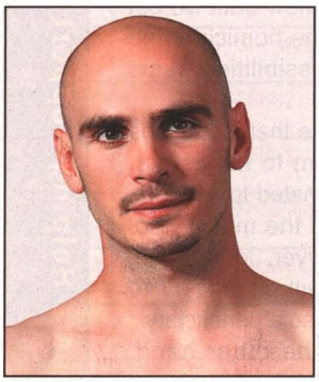
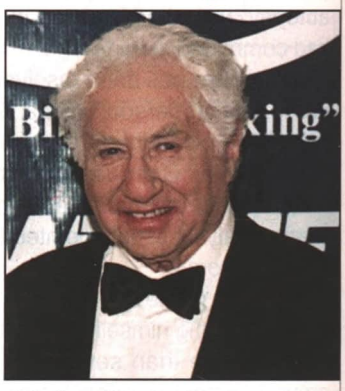


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Pavlik: Honorary nose job



Schulberg: Dead at 95

Quotable

"I've given 30 years to the sport and the last few years have been the most unhappy years of my boxing life … it has been hell"

—A despondent Enzo Calzaghe, telling ***The Sun*** *newspaper why he almost quit training boxers following his son's (Joe Calzaghe), retirement, the defeat of title-holders Enzo Calzaghe and Gavin Reese, and the lost of hot prospect Nathan Cleverly to promoter Frank Warren*

"One could make a case that Roy Jones is the Pedro of the fight game right now.

*–**Sporting News** blogger Dave Larelere, comparing Jones to Phillies' pitcher Pedro Martinez*

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended August 23, 2009

Heavyweights: No changes.

Cruiserweights: No changes.

Light Heavyweights: No changes

Super Middleweights: Robert Stieglitz debuts at seven after stopping Karoly Balzsay, who falls to 10. Balzsay's demotion forces out Denis Inkin (10th last issue).

Middleweights: No changes.

Junior Middleweights: No changes.

Welterweights: Zab Judah (eighth last issue) and Isaac Hlatswayo (ninth last issue) switch places following Hlatswayo's decision over Delvin Rodriguez.

Junior Welterweights: Junior Witter (third last issue) exits due to his TKO loss to Devon Alexander, who is new at four. Also debuting is Juan Diaz, who moved up from lightweight and was awarded a controversial decision over Paul Malignaggi (fifth last issue). Diaz is now five, and Malignaggi is six. The realignment also dropped Juan Urango (sixth last issue) to seven, and Andreas Kotelnik (seventh last issue) to 10.

Lightweights: Juan Diaz (first last issue) has moved up to the 140-pound division, which elevates everybody rated two through 10 last issue one spot each, and makes room for Antonio DeMarco to enter at 10.

Junior Lightweights: Roberto Guerrero rockets from nine to two, thanks to his comprehensive decision over Malcolm Klassen (second last issue), who falls to five. Klassen's demotion forces down Cassius Baloyi (fifth last issue) to sixth, replacing the departed Jorge Barrios (sixth last issue), who is fighting at lightweight. Humberto Gutierrez' victory over Sergey Gulyakevich (10th last issue) allows him to debut at nine, while Kevin Mitchell replaces Gulyakevich at 10.

Featherweights: No changes.

Junior Featherweights: No changes.

Bantamweights: No changes.

Junior Bantamweights: Nonito Donaire moves up from flyweight and replaces Simphiwe Nongqayi at 10.

Flyweights: Donaire (first last issue) is now fighting at 115 pounds, which allowed all 112-pounders rated below him last issue to advance one slot each, and Zolani Tete to enter at 10.

Junior Flyweights: No changes.

Strawweights: No changes.

The Ring
"The Bible Of Boxing"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Welterweight
2. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Lightweight
3. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
4. **Shane Mosley**
   Welterweight
5. **Israel Vazquez**
   Featherweight
6. **Rafael Marquez**
   Featherweight
7. **Nonito Donaire**
   Junior Bantamweight
8. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
9. **Celestino Caballero**
   Junior Featherweight
10. **Paul Williams**
    Junior Middleweight/
    Middleweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **ringtv.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended August 23, 2009

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

THE RING Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of THE RING Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at ringtv.com.

Records provided by boxrec.com.

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDENBOY PROMOTIONS

Robert Guerrero vaults from nine to two in the junior lightweight ratings after his easy decision over Malcolm Klassen

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
Ukraine 53-3 (47)

1. **VITALI KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 37-2 (36)
2. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
Russia 17-0 (12)
3. **EDDIE CHAMBERS**
Philadelphia, PA 35-1 (18)
4. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV**
Uzbekistan 25-1-1 (17)
5. **NICOLAY VALUEV**
Russia 50-1 (34)
6. **CHRIS ARREOLA**
Riverside, CA 27-0 (24)
7. **DAVID HAYE**
England 22-1 (21)
8. **JOHN RUIZ**
Chelsea, MA 43-8-1 (29)
9. **DENIS BOYTSOV**
Russia 25-0 (20)
10. **ALEXANDER DIMITRENKO**
Ukraine 29-1 (19)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 37-1 (27)
2. **CORY SPINKS**
St. Louis, MO 37-5 (11)
3. **VERNO PHILLIPS**
Belize 42-12-1 (21)
4. **SERGIO MARTINEZ**
Argentina 44-1-2 (24)
5. **SERGIO MORA**
Los Angeles, CA 21-1-1 (5)
6. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK**
Ukraine 36-0 (22)
7. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 31-2-1 (27)
8. **DEANDRE LATIMORE**
St. Louis, MO 20-2 (16)
9. **JAMES KIRKLAND**
Austin, TX 25-0 (22)
10. **JAMIE MOORE**
England 32-3 (23)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN**
Indonesia 42-0-2 (22)
2. **STEVEN LUEVANO**
La Puente, CA 37-1-1 (15)
3. **CRISTOBAL CRUZ**
Mexico 39-11-1 (23)
4. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 28-4 (20)
5. **JORGE SOLIS**
Mexico 37-2-2 (27)
6. **MARIO SANTIAGO**
Puerto Rico 19-1-1 (14)
7. **MARTIN HONORIO**
Mexico 25-4-1 (13)
8. **RYOL LI LEE**
Japan 13-1-1 (7)
9. **ELIO ROJAS**
Dominican Republic 21-1 (13)
10. **YURIORKIS GAMBOA**
Cuba 15-0 (13)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CELESTINO CABALLERO**
Panama 32-2 (22)
2. **JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 26-0 (24)
3. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM**
Thailand 38-1 (27)
4. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON**
Mexico 36-2 (31)
5. **STEVE MOLITOR**
Canada 29-1 (11)
6. **BERNARD DUNNE**
Ireland 28-1 (15)
7. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
Japan 34-4-3 (21)
8. **RICARDO CORDOBA**
Panama 34-2-2 (21)
9. **JHONNY GONZALEZ**
Mexico 40-7 (34)
10. **JEFF MATHEBULA**
South Africa 22-2-2 (12)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA**
Japan 27-2 (11)
2. **ANSELMO MORENO**
Panama 26-1-1 (8)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO**
Ukraine 21-2-2 (7)
4. **JOSEPH AGBEKO**
Ghana 27-1 (22)
5. **YONNHY PEREZ**
Colombia 19-0 (14)
6. **SILENCE MABUZA**
South Africa 22-3 (18)
7. **ABNER MARES**
Mexico 18-0 (11)
8. **NEHOMAR CERMENO**
Venezuela 17-0 (10)
9. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 27-3 (20)
10. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 39-2-1 (29)

Cruiserweights

Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: TOMASZ ADAMEK
Poland 38-1 (26)

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 22-2 (11)
2. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 41-2-1 (31)
3. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama 36-3-2 (28)
4. **GIACOBBE FRAGOMENI**
Italy 26-1-1 (10)
5. **MARCO HUCK**
Yugoslavia 25-1 (20)
6. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 29-4-1 (18)
7. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 26-1-1 (19)
8. **TROY ROSS**
Canada 22-1 (15)
9. **OLA AFOLABI**
England 14-1-3 (6)
10. **MATT GODFREY**
Providence, RI 19-1 (10)

Light Heavyweights

Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 49-5-1 (32)
2. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 28-0 (17)
3. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Jamaica 49-12-2 (33)
4. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 30-0 (17)
5. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 27-6 (19)
6. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 50-5 (40)
7. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 42-4-1 (24)
8. **JEAN PASCAL**
Haiti 23-1 (15)
9. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Romania 26-1 (15)
10. **YUSAF MACK**
Philadelphia, PA 28-2-2 (17)

Super Middleweights

Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 41-1 (31)
2. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Romania 24-0 (19)
3. **CARL FROCH**
England 25-0 (21)
4. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 28-2 (21)
5. **SAKIO BIKA**
Cameroon 27-3-2 (17)
6. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 28-1 (20)
7. **ROBERT STIEGLITZ**
Germany 36-2 (22)
8. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
Little Rock, AR 28-3-1 (17)
9. **ANDRE WARD**
Oakland, CA 19-0 (12)
10. **KAROLY BALZSAY**
Hungary 21-1 (15)

Middleweights

Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: KELLY PAVLIK
Youngstown, OH 35-1 (31)

1. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 33-2-1 (14)
2. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 31-3 (15)
3. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 37-1 (27)
4. **KHOREN GEVOR**
Armenia 30-4 (16)
5. **DAVID LOPEZ**
Mexico 38-12 (23)
6. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 26-2 (17)
7. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 36-3 (23)
8. **DANIEL GEALE**
Australia 21-1 (13)
9. **SEBASTIAN ZBIK**
Germany 27-0 (10)
10. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 51-5-1 (25)

Welterweights

Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 46-5 (39)
2. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 34-1 (27)
3. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Ghana 35-3 (20)
4. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 37-6 (27)
5. **ANDRE BERTO**
Winter Haven, FL 25-0 (19)
6. **CARLOS QUINTANA**
Puerto Rico 26-2 (20)
7. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 29-4 (14)
8. **ISAAC HLATSWAYO**
South Africa 29-1-1 (10)
9. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 37-6 (25)
10. **VYACHESLAV SENCHENKO**
Ukraine 29-0 (20)

Jr. Welterweights

Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO
Philippines 49-3-2 (37)

1. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
Palm Springs, CA 24-0 (11)
2. **RICKY HATTON**
England 45-2 (32)
3. **AMIR KHAN**
England 21-1 (15)
4. **DEVON ALEXANDER**
St. Louis, MO 19-0 (12)
5. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 35-2 (17)
6. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
Brooklyn, NY 26-3 (5)
7. **JUAN URANGO**
Colombia 21-2-1 (16)
8. **KENDALL HOLT**
Paterson, NJ 25-3 (13)
9. **MARCOS MAIDANA**
Argentina 26-1 (25)
10. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
Ukraine 31-3-1 (13)

Lightweights

Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ
Mexico 50-4-1 (37)

1. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
Cuba 36-4-1 (22)
2. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 25-0 (25)
3. **ROLANDO REYES**
Mexico 31-4-2 (20)
4. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 25-2 (21)
5. **ALI FUNEKA**
South Africa 30-2-2 (25)
6. **MIGUEL VAZQUEZ**
Mexico 25-3 (12)
7. **ANTHONY PETERSON**
Washington, DC 29-0 (19)
8. **PAULUS MOSES**
Namibia 25-0 (17)
9. **MIGUEL ACOSTA**
Venezuela 26-3-2 (20)
10. **ANTONIO DEMARCO**
Mexico 22-1-1 (16)

Jr. Lightweights

Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 48-7-2 (31)
2. **ROBERT GUERRERO**
Gilroy, CA 24-1-1 (16)
3. **MZONKE FANA**
South Africa 29-4 (12)
4. **ROMAN MARTINEZ**
Puerto Rico 22-0-1 (13)
5. **MALCOLM KLASSEN**
South Africa 24-5-2 (15)
6. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
South Africa 36-4-1 (19)
7. **JORGE LINARES**
Venezuela 27-0 (18)
8. **NICKY COOK**
England 29-2 (16)
9. **HUMBERTO GUTIERREZ**
Mexico 26-1-1 (19)
10. **KEVIN MITCHELL**
England 29-0 (22)

Jr. Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Armenia 32-2-1 (26)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 33-3 (27)
3. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 13-1 (8)
4. **Z GORRES**
Philippines 29-2-2 (16)
5. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 52-5-1 (40)
6. **DIMITRI KIRILOV**
Russia 29-4-1 (9)
7. **KOHEI KONO**
Japan 23-4 (8)
8. **DAIKI KAMEDA**
Japan 14-1 (10)
9. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 30-5-1 (22)
10. **NONITO DONAIRE**
Philippines 22-1 (14)

Flyweights

Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 35-2-3 (22)
2. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 72-3-1 (38)
3. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT**
Thailand 47-1-1 (20)
4. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 30-0-2 (19)
5. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 34-5-2 (15)
6. **KOKI KAMEDA**
Japan 20-0 (13)
7. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
South Africa 23-2 (16)
8. **JULIO CESAR MIRANDA**
Mexico 29-4-1 (22)
9. **LUIS CONCEPCION**
Panama 17-1 (12)
10. **ZOLANI TETE**
South Africa 11-0 (10)

Jr. Flyweights

Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON
Puerto Rico 32-0-1 (6)

1. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 25-2 (15)
2. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 36-5 (20)
3. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
Mexico 21-1-1 (17)
4. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 28-2-2 (20)
5. **CESAR CANCHILA**
Colombia 28-2 (22)
6. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 28-3-1 (11)
7. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 24-2 (10)
8. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
Argentina 20-1 (10)
9. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 25-3-1 (19)
10. **JUANITO RUBILLAR**
Philippines 46-13-7 (22)

Strawweights

Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
Nicaragua 24-0 (20)
2. **RAUL GARCIA**
Mexico 27-0-1 (16)
3. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
Thailand 31-0 (12)
4. **NKOSINATHI JOYI**
South Africa 20-0 (15)
5. **MILAN MELINDO**
Philippines 18-0 (5)
6. **DONNIE NIETES**
Philippines 24-1-3 (14)
7. **FLORANTE CONDES**
Philippines 23-5-1 (20)
8. **JUAN PALACIOS**
Nicaragua 26-2 (21)
9. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 62-8-5 (31)
10. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 23-4 (9)

By Jeff Ryan

KO-Nomics

From bailing out the banks and the automakers to rolling out the pork barrel under the guise of an economic stimulus package, the federal government has been throwing money around like Ricky Hatton fans at Happy Hour. There are tax credits for first-time homebuyers and rebates for new car buyers who trade in their gas-guzzlers. Heck, if you're bounced from your job and want to keep your medical insurance, the feds will even pick up nearly two-thirds of your COBRA payments. What a deal. You can punch out the boss *and* be covered if you break your hand in the process.

The government is propping up the banking industry, infusing the timber and steel industries, and trying to resuscitate the automakers. There's one industry, however, that generous old Uncle Sam has thus far overlooked. That, of course, is boxing. Unlike the carmakers in Detroit, the Sweet Science has no problem churning out the kind of durable, powerful, and stylish (sometimes even energy-efficient) models the consumer demands. And unlike the financial institutions, the fight game doesn't pay the guys who are worst at their job the most money. Still, boxing has its share of fiscal woes. Just today, for instance, the Roy Jones Industrial Average was down 12 points at the close of trading.

So forgive me if my request for a handout is about as subtle as a panhandler's rap in a stalled subway car, but if President Obama still has a few bucks left over, I'd like to offer some suggestions for government programs that could give boxing a much-needed boost. (Or, to put it another way: Yo, Uncle Sam, I got your stimulus package *right here*.)

In no particular order of cost overruns:

•**Universal Mental Health Care:** All this talk of a recession and a depression is putting some of us in need of a chest compression. To guard against any anxiety attacks that might spring up as unexpectedly as Manny Pacquiao firing a combination out of a crouch, or to prevent fight fans from ever

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Free Prozac for anxiety-stricken fans of Pac-Man's opponents

lapsing into a collective funk, the feds should provide free psychiatric visits, cover the cost of prescriptions for Prozac and Zoloft, or do whatever else is necessary to keep the boxing public on an even emotional keel.

After all, there's a lot to be depressed about these days. The miraculous Bernard Hopkins is inching ever closer to permanent retirement, major bouts on pay-per-view cost as much as 55 bucks, coverage of the sport in newspapers and general-interest sports magazines becomes more scarce with each passing year, the quality of the old fight films on ESPN Classic has bottomed out, women's boxing has received the go-ahead for the 2012 Olympics, it appears that Lennox Lewis really isn't coming back, and, as we went to press, one of the best pairings of the year, Kelly Pavlik vs. Paul Williams, had been postponed. (Vent your frustration over that last development by inserting your own curse words here).

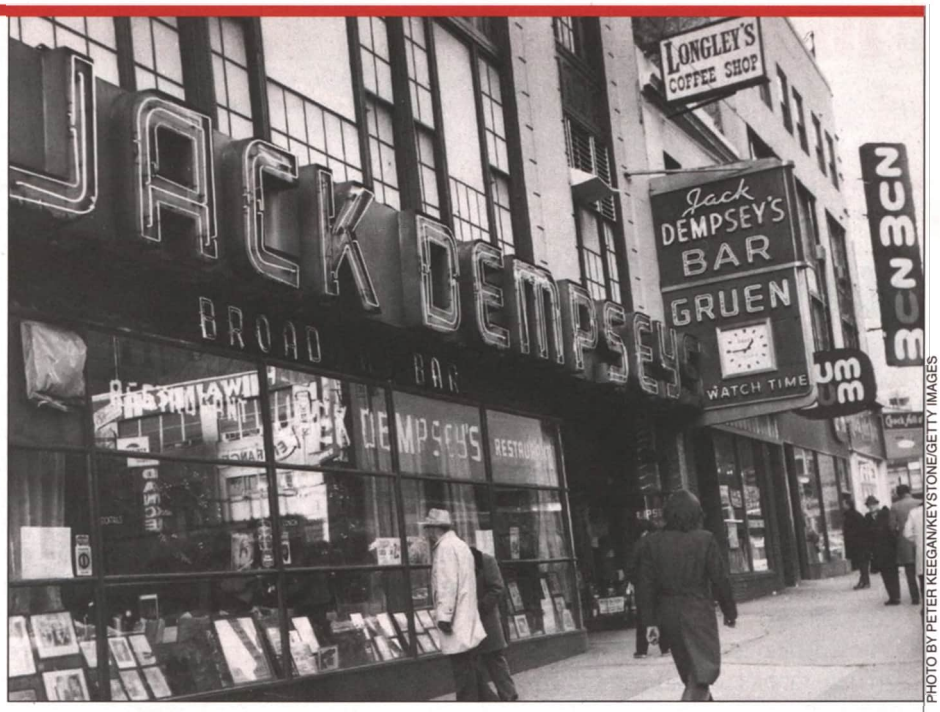


PHOTO BY PETER KEEGAN/KEYSTONE/GETTY IMAGES

Ryan wants Uncle Sam to rebuild Dempsey's

If the government isn't willing to pick up the tab for this admittedly costly program, perhaps a cheaper alternative can be considered, like giving every potentially despondent fan a Dr. Phil DVD and a voucher for Jack Daniel's.

•**A "Money for Matchups" program:** If there are potential shootouts out there that your Uncle Dave would pay top dollar to see, maybe the same goes for your Uncle Sam. Just imagine the dream fights that instantly become reality if the spend-happy feds are controlling the checkbook and $80-million purse splits aren't out of the question. Pacquiao vs. Floyd Mayweather. Wladimir Klitschko vs. David Haye. Israel Vazquez vs. Rafael Marquez IV. Hopkins vs. Chad Dawson. And that's just on one installment of ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*!

•**Bailouts for multi-millionaires who don't deserve it:** When some of these, ahem, hard-luck cases cry poverty, they're crying into a $12 imported beer and wiping their eyes with a handkerchief that costs twice as much as my best business suit.

Top Rank promoter Bob Arum, who has more money than some small countries' treasuries, is closing his Las Vegas gym because he supposedly can't afford it. Mayweather, whose career earnings feature more commas than all of Steven King's novels combined, has tax woes. And Madison Square Garden, the place where you pay $5.50 for a hot dog and four dollars for a pretzel, has delayed its renovation while it restructures its finances. But we won't have to pass around the tin cup if the feds are willing to supply the corporate welfare. Think about it: Is lending a few smackers to Arum, "Pretty Boy," and MSG really any worse than helping out Bank of America and AIG?

•**A boost for the construction industry:** In the form of new boxing-only arenas (roughly the size of the old Olympic Auditorium) in Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Miami, a new Kronk Gym in Detroit, a complete renovation of the Spectrum, the Blue Horizon, and Joe Frazier's Gym in Philly, and a rebuilding of Jack Dempsey's restaurant in New York.

•**Incentives for first-time Home (Box Office) buyers:** Nobody who loves the fight game should be without HBO. So if a jock-crazy house somewhere in America desires "The Network of Champions" and can't afford the extra hit on the cable bill, the boys in Washington ought to cover the cost, at least for the first six months. Never should a true boxing devotee be deprived of Larry Merchant's summation, Jim Lampley's incantation, Lennox Lewis' hesitation, and Max Kellerman's verbal masturbation.

•**"Cash for Clunkers":** This was a hit with any auto buyer who ditched his 1990 Pontiac Grand Prix, the one that was blowing black smoke out of the engine and getting three city blocks to the gallon, in favor of a rebate on a brand new Ford Fusion. And it would be a great concept for the fight game too. Just think how appealing it would be to the promoter who could trade in a rusting, underperforming relic for an up-and-coming contender or hot prospect that doesn't have a scratch on him.

Picture saying a permanent goodbye to Evander Holyfield, as though he's a '90 pickup truck with an air conditioner that blows heat, bald tires, and a speedometer that hasn't worked since Bill Clinton's first term. Imagine trading in a John Ruiz and getting a rebate that went toward the signing of a Denis Boytsov. Or turning in, say, 41-year-old Kevin Kelley and receiving money to put toward the signing of a gold medalist from the next Olympics. Would it be too much to ask that the handsome young prospect wear cologne featuring that new-car smell? ■

By Ivan Goldman

Haye's Hot Air Blows Door Open For Arreola

2009 is shaping up as one heck of a year for Hispanic Americans. First Sonia Sotomayor completed her journey from the Bronx projects to the Supreme Court bench, and now Chris Arreola has fought his way out of a Southern California barrio to get a crack at the formidable Vitali Klitschko.

The delicious part is that Arreola got this opportunity thanks to blab-master David Haye, who may be the only fighter in history to pull out of fights and then complain that his opponents failed to fight him.

But by backing off from Vitali so he could take on practically immobile Nikolay Valuev, chronic complainer Haye opened the door for someone who recognizes a break for what it is. Most insiders expected Arreola to be destroyed. Just like those insiders who said Muhammad Ali couldn't beat Sonny Liston and that Mike Tyson would break Buster Douglas in two. As the Arreola-Vitali Klitschko fight is scheduled for a few weeks after this issue hits the newsstands, readers will already know whether or not the naysayers were correct. But regardless of the outcome, Arreola was smart enough to grab the opportunity.

A few months ago when I asked Arreola's promoter, Dan Goossen, whether he had any interesting negotiations going on, he said he was trying to put his guy in with Vitali's brother, Wladimir, who has since won THE RING heavyweight championship.

Though nothing ever came of Wladimir-Arreola, now we get to see something that could be even better. Vitali-Arreola offers truly exciting possibilities, though I'm not sure ex-champ Lennox Lewis would agree.

"You can't fool me," he told Joseph Santoliquito in the September 2009 issue of THE RING. "There's no real matchup there, though you'll have people trying to sell it."

Okay, so Lennox was talking about Arreola versus Wladimir, not Vitali. But Lennox knows from personal experience what a tough opponent Vitali is—probably tougher than his little brother. Oddly enough, though, he may be a more suitable Klitschko for Arreola. Less robotic and more likely to mix it up, he's also more likely to have made a mistake than by-the-numbers Wladimir. Which also means we're more likely to see something worth seeing. At least for as long as it lasts.

Maybe as Haye sat on his duff and watched two heavyweights in L.A.'s Staples Center who are both willing to roll

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Haye needs a new T-shirt

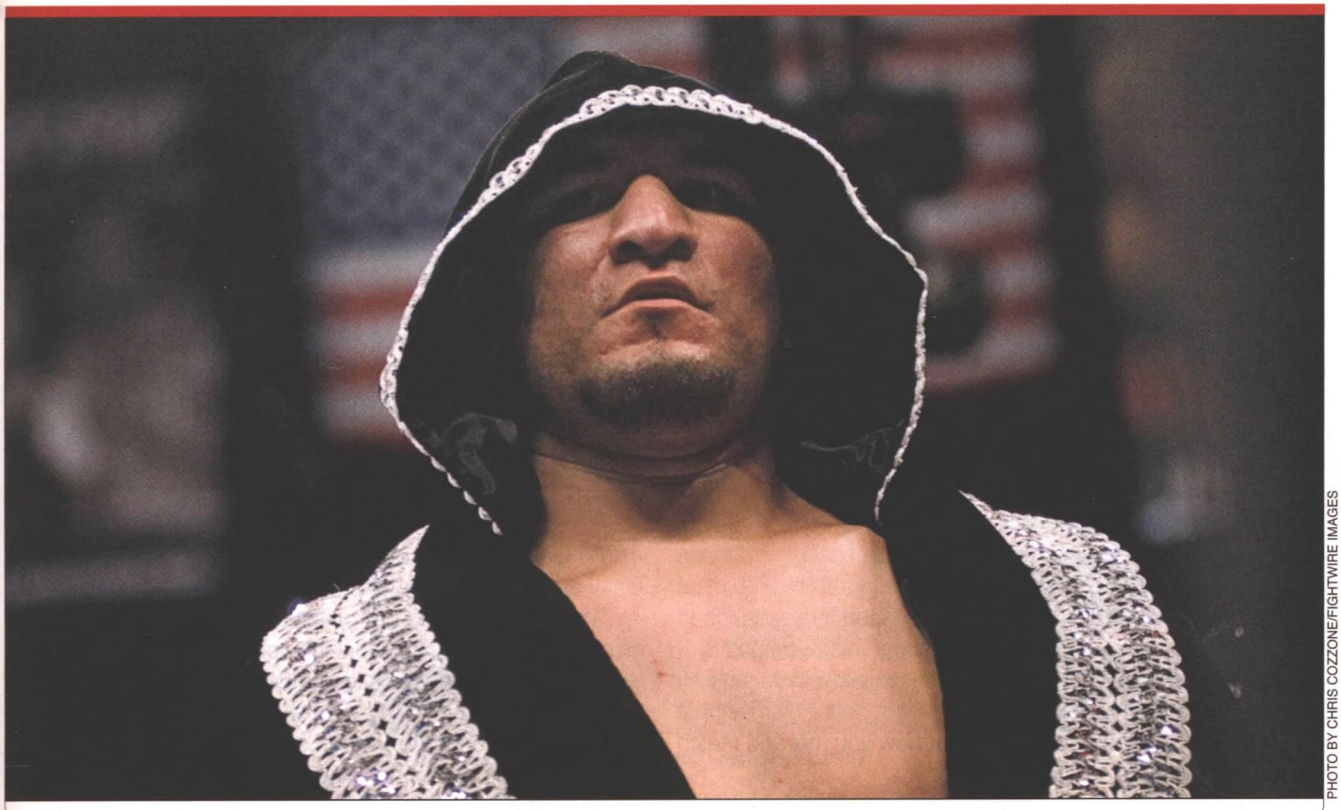


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Arreola knows an opportunity when he sees one

the dice, he'll learn a thing or two that could help his own career. With his latest withdrawal, Haye managed to win the title of British heavyweight hot air champ, taking the prize from talented vocal maestro Audley Harrison, who was last seen retreating into the gray, drizzly English sunset after losing to someone named Martin Rogan. You know how many burgers McDonald's has sold? Not as many as the number of ways Audley has ducked world-class heavyweights.

Haye's excuse for substituting the less formidable Valuev for Vitali is that it apparently made him eligible for the meaningless WBA heavyweight title. I insert the word "apparently" because the weird pronouncements emanating these days from alphabet gangs sound more and more like the crazy edicts from North Korea's Kim Jong-Il: What was true Tuesday may be erased by Wednesday. Haye also complained that the Vitali bout wouldn't have provided him with a purse to his liking. But then why did he accept the deal in the first place? Probably for the same reason Kim doesn't fire his hairdresser.

How a mediocre talent like the towering but tentative Valuev ended up running around with a "world" title is a topic best left to philosophers of the absurd. But Haye's excuse just won't fly. You don't have to be an Einstein to know that the path to heavyweight prominence leads straight to the Klitschko brothers. By beating Vitali, Haye could have made a mint fighting a revenge match against Wladimir, except of course he already pulled out of a fight against Wladimir before he pulled out against Vitali.

Valuev is as big as a Hummer, but he moves around the ring with all the grace and cunning of a Cyclops with a sty in

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Valuev: Slow-moving target for Haye

his eye. Goossen, surveying the aftermath of Haye's fickle finagling, questioned the propriety of the Klitschkos going after him in the first place.

"It's one thing to say Arreola has to fight somebody [formidable]," Goossen said before he finalized the Vitali deal, "but at least Chris has been fighting heavyweights and dismantling them. You can't say that about David Haye." Former cruiserweight bruiser Haye has notched a 4-0 (4) record against heavyweight competition, with journeyman Monte Barrett the best know of the quartet.

But I haven't given up on Haye. In fact, I believe that if he works hard enough in the gym, he might someday win an opportunity to pull out of a fight against Arreola.

Super Six: Wow! Everyone's been wondering how Showtime was able to pull off its remarkable super middleweight tournament, somehow getting most of the best fighters in the division and their five promoters to agree to a round-robin set of fights. Nobody ducks anybody. The reason they got it done is simple: Floyd Mayweather is not a super middleweight.

In a previous column I'd suggested a super middle tourney for four fighters, and they've made it even better by making it a "Super Six Tournament." No matter how you mix and match them, these are all terrific fights.

Tragedy In Mexico: The death of junior welter Marco Nazareth after being kayoed by Julio Cesar Chavez' son, Omar, switched a light onto the barely regulated world of Mexican boxing. Nazareth, 4-4 (3), had lost three of his last four, yet he was thrown into a six-rounder in Puerto Vallarta against a fighter who was 16-0-1 (13) going in. Nazareth hadn't been in the ring for eight months prior to the bout. No conscientious commission would have approved this match-up. Rest in peace, Marco Nazareth.

Javier Capetillo, the repulsive plaster-master caught loading Antonio Margarito's gloves in Los Angeles, worked the corner of Giovanni Seguro on a Top Rank show in Mexico. Apparently, even the suspended Capetillo can still train fighters in California as long as he doesn't try to work the corner on fight night. And Armando Garcia, who was forced to resign as the California commission's executive director, works as a judge in Mexico. You get the feeling if Charles Manson goes missing from the California state penitentiary system, he'd turn up as a boxing official in Juarez.

And More Death: Rest in peace Alexis Arguello, Arturo Gatti, and Vernon Forrest, fine men who all died violently and much too early. We grieve for them.

The circumstances of Forrest's death in particular are a lesson in the vagaries of life. One seemingly innocuous detail leads to another that leads to another that leads to something momentous—and in this case—awful. His godson needs to go to the bathroom, so Vernon stops at a gas station in his flashy Jaguar, gets robbed, tries to get his money back, and dies a senseless death.

A few years ago, Forrest came out to the West Coast to train in Freddie Roach's crowded Wild Card Gym. Despite his status as a world-class fighter, he asked for no special privileges and showed up without an entourage. He smiled a lot and had a way about him that made the people around

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Forrest regains WBC belt from Sergio Mora in his final bout

him feel better. He was just that kind of person.

Iron Mike: The movie *Tyson*, now out on DVD, received excellent reviews, but those were from film critics, so I figured, "What do they know?" Well, in this case they know plenty. The film is not just riveting; it's mandatory for anyone who's been following Tyson's life these last decades—that is, everyone on Earth.

Whatever you think of Mike Tyson and whatever you know about him, you don't know as much as you think you do if you haven't seen this film. The downside: It's jazzed up with techno-goodies to prove director James Toback is avant-garde. But Iron Mike tears open his soul and shows it to you.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Was Dave Moretti taking a nap during Vazquez-Prescott?

And there's footage to remind us of what a fine heavyweight he was: quick, powerful, razor-sharp, a deadly dynamo before it all fell apart. But, then, Tyson had been falling apart his entire life, ever since he was deserted first by his father and later by his mother. Even as Cus D'Amato found him and built a great prizefighter out of him.

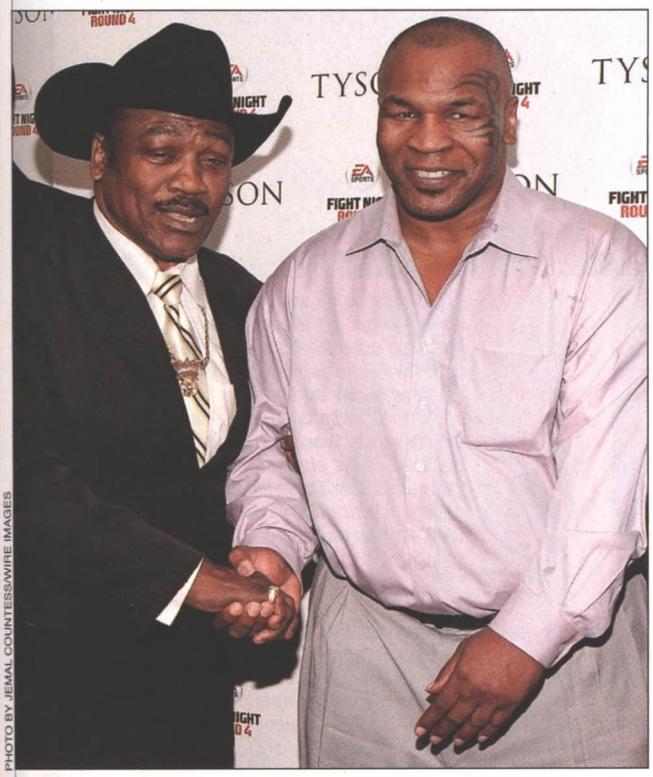


PHOTO BY JEMAL COUNTESS/WIRE IMAGES

Smokin' Joe greets Iron Mike at New York screening of **Tyson**

Magoo One: And the award for the most unconvincing actor goes to … envelope please … Anges Adjaho, who was brushed with a shot to the head from Antonio DeMarco before he took a knee and then behaved like DeMarco slammed him in the back of the neck with a brick.

Good call in Sunrise, Florida, from referee Telis Assimenios, who counted Adjaho out.

Magoo Two: Judge Dave Moretti, for his 97-92 score on the wrong side of Miguel Vazquez-Breidis Prescott. I'm not sure Vazquez was as overwhelming as Teddy Atlas saw it, but he sure as heck won more rounds than Prescott, which is why Duane Ford and Jerry Roth saw it 95-94 and 96-93, respectively, for tricky, determined Vazquez, giving him the split decision.

Futch One: To the usually trash-talking Vic Darchinyan. He clearly lost to Joseph Agbeko, but not by much. Lots of fighters in his shoes would claim victory. Darchinyan, who in this fight reverted back to his wild-man style and had a hard time landing clean shots, was brutally honest with himself and fans.

Futch Two: To referee Arthur Mercante Jr. for carrying his own scissors.

Futch Three: To referee Raul Caiz Jr., who was alert enough to see lightweight Marvin Quintero was out on his feet against Tyrone Harris and stepping in to stop it (with no complaints from Quintero). This was a difficult one to spot, but Caiz Jr. gave Quintero every reasonable chance and jumped in precisely at the right time. ■

Camera Clicks

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

"This little piggy went to market ... this little piggy stayed home ..." Some father-son games are just as much fun when the kid is 26 as they were when he was two. Two-time former heavyweight champ George Foreman shows off the fist of his son George "Monk" Foreman III, who is off to a promising 2-0 (2) start in the pro ranks. Whether he has the same power in that right fist as his old man remains to be seen, but we know this much: Those little piggies balled together can make a winless Midwest tomato can cry "Wee! Wee! Wee!" all the way home.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN/RINGSIDE PHOTOS

Did you hear the one about the two Poles who painted their faces for a Tomasz Adamek fight? Actually, the devotion of Adamek's fans is no joke. If you can draw a big crowd for a fight against Bobby Gunn, that's when you know you're popular. And if middle-aged men and their daughters are painting their faces like drunken football fans for your fights, all the better.

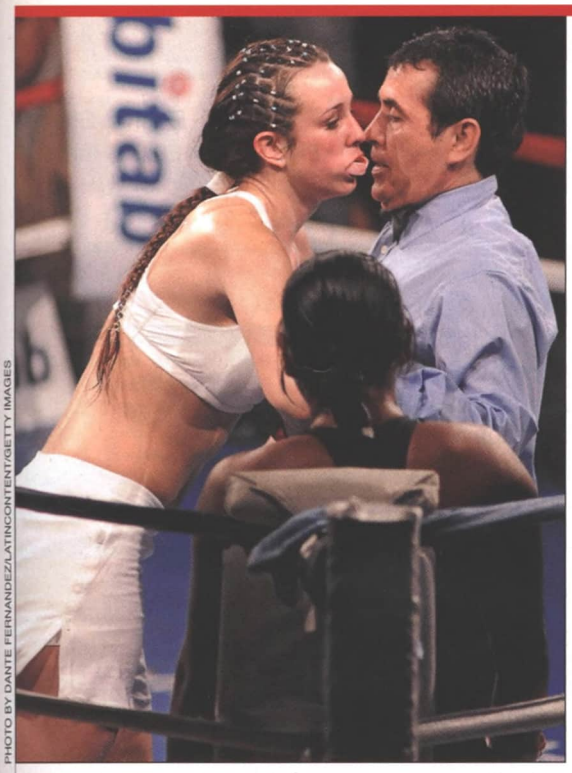


PHOTO BY DANTE FERNANDEZ/LATINCONTENT/GETTY IMAGES

It's everybody's favorite eighth-grade make-out game, Pass The Mouthpiece! Referee Hernan Guajardo is the lucky recipient of Uruguayan female junior welterweight Chris Namus' advances, but he resisted the urge to try for second base and instead called a halt to the fight in the first round, making Lely Luz Flores (seen standing in the neutral corner) an upset TKO winner. It's safe to say that a bad night for Namus will get even worse when she sees this picture of herself.

Calling himself "The Sioux Warrior," Shawn Hawk entered the ring for his July fight against Matt Godfrey wearing traditional Native American garb. (Except for the wife beater undershirt. That's not quite an ancient Sioux tradition.)

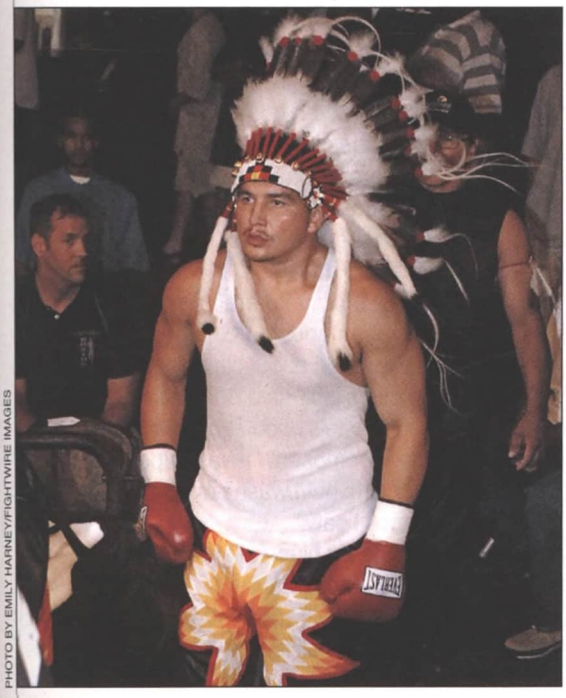


PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

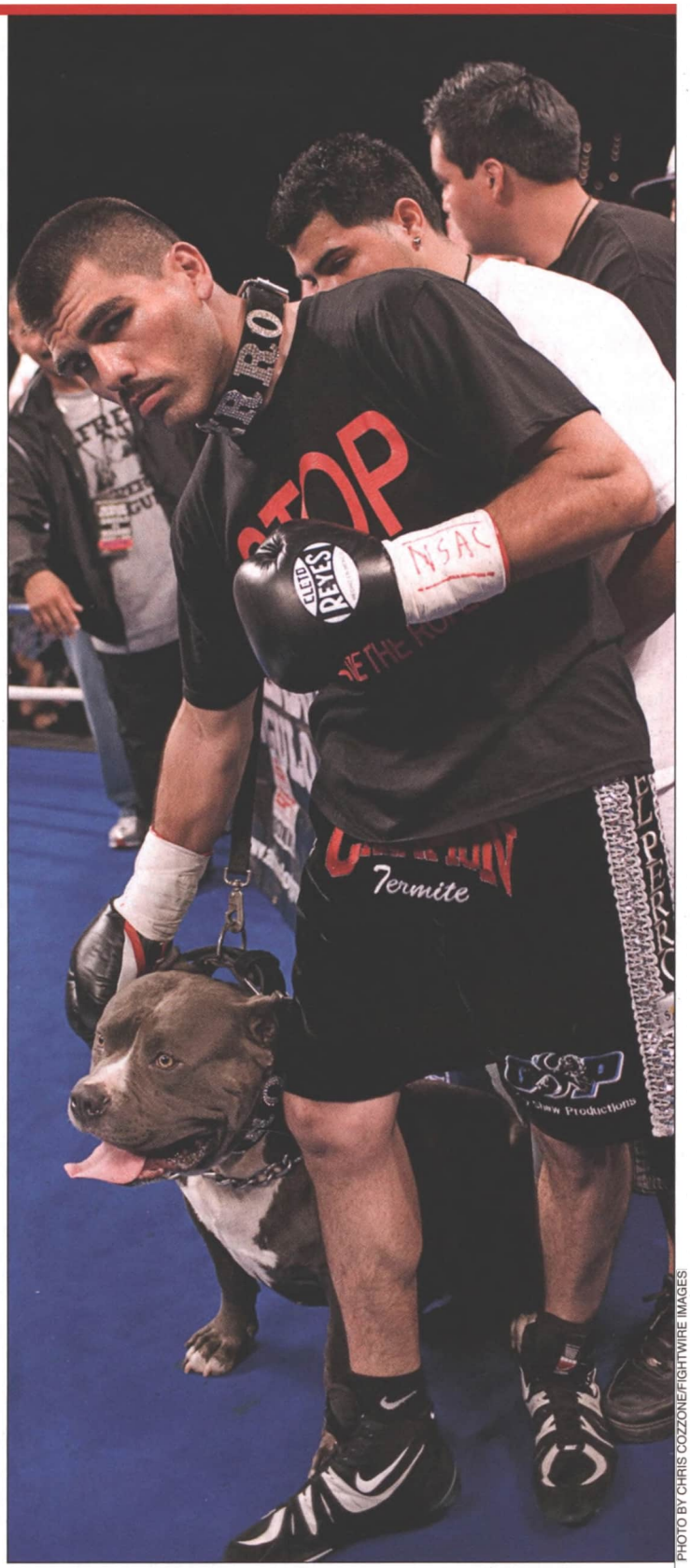


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Always looking for new promotional angles, Gary Shaw recently put together the first-ever human/canine mixed tag team boxing match, featuring Alfredo Angulo and his pooch. As it turned out, the dog never needed to tag in, as Angulo kayoed Gabriel Rosado in the second round. (By the way, it wasn't easy, but aren't you glad we made it through that whole caption without making a single Michael Vick joke?)

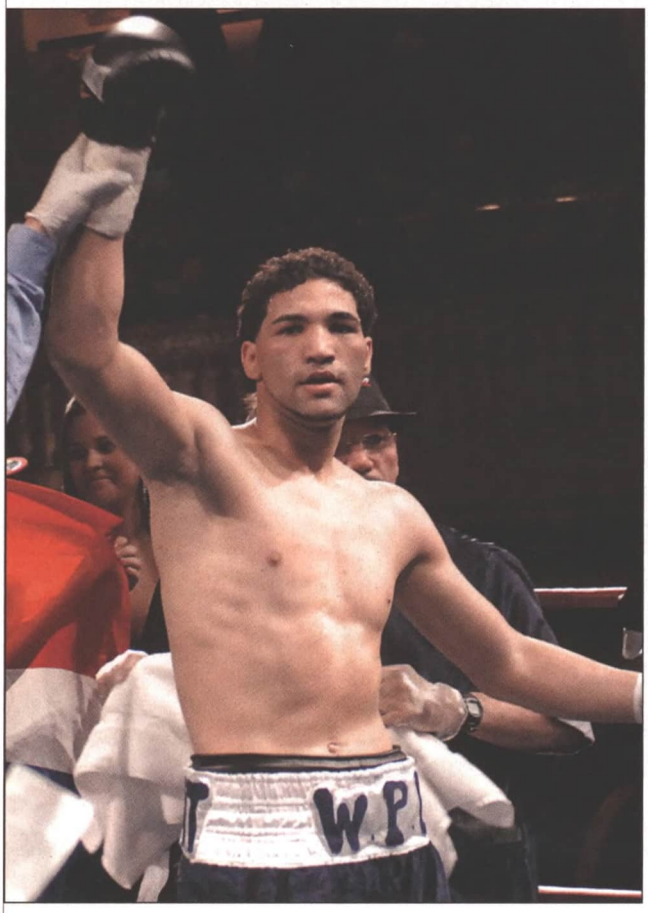
By Tim Starks
PHOTOS BY EMILY HARNEY

Edwin Rodriguez Middleweight

Edwin Rodriguez didn't find boxing when he was looking for a way out of trouble, the way so many young men do. Instead, at the most critical moment of his young boxing career, trouble found him, and it found him in a terrible, tiny way.

Rodriguez had a happy childhood and stayed out of trouble. After he won a national amateur championship, the mayor of his hometown, Worcester, Massachusetts, gave him the key to the city. It was the fall of 2006 when the trouble came, shortly before Rodriguez would have departed to California for his first Olympic qualifier.

The twins his girlfriend, Stephanie Rapa, were expecting in January arrived four months early. They weighed 18 ounces each when they were born. Then they lost weight, dropping to less than a pound. As the babies struggled for their lives, Edwin, Stephanie, and their doctors had to decide: Should they take Edwin Jr. and Serena Lynn off life support? Or should they keep fighting, knowing that even if the twins survived, they would have health problems that would follow them forever?



The decision Rodriguez made with his family—to keep fighting—led his children from death's door to being the happy kids he says they are today, although his son has cerebral palsy and his daughter has suffered her own, smaller ailments like paralyzed vocal chords that had to be repaired with surgery.

That decision to keep fighting, in turn, profoundly shaped Rodriguez' boxing life, from how he fights, to why he fights, and where his career is now.

At first, however, his children's illnesses wreaked havoc. Rodriguez lost focus, falling behind his peers and losing out on his Olympic dream. While his old amateur foes Daniel Jacobs and Shawn Estrada won acclaim and attention, "La Bomba," as Rodriguez is known, turned pro in 2008 to little more than local fanfare.

But as his twins got better, he spent more time in the gym, and before long, people such as promoter Lou DiBella, who later signed Rodriguez, took notice.

"I followed the kid when he was an amateur. I thought he was really good. Then he disappeared," said DiBella. "Then one day I was looking at results on one of the websites and I saw that he'd beat someone I knew was a good trialhorse. He's a high, high, high character kid. He has a resiliency in his personal life that translates into the ring."

Blasting through trialhorses who gave fellow prospects a tougher time is all Rodriguez does these days. In March, in his most eye-opening win, he landed an overhand right and then put together a finishing assault in the second round to stop Patrick Thompson, a sturdy veteran who went the distance with Vanes Martisroyan and Joe Greene.

"Going in, DiBella really raved about him. I thought it was all hype, which is any promoter's job," said Brian Adams, a boxing analyst who called the locally televised *Broadway Boxing* card headlined by Rodriguez-Thompson. "I was expecting to see some kind of talent out of him, but I wasn't expecting to see the overwhelming performance I saw."

In a town that got a taste for blue-collar boxing idols during the rise of the recently retired Jose Antonio Rivera (who briefly held the WBA welterweight strap), Rodriguez nearly sold out the 1,200-seat Mechanics Hall for the Thompson fight. His

(Continued on Page 110)

Pro Record

2008		
Jan. 26	Samuel Ortiz Gomez, Mansfield, MA	KO 1
Feb. 2	Fitzgerald Johnson, Boston, MA	KO 4
March 3	James North, Salamanca, NY	W 4
April 4	Jeffrey Osborne Jr., Boston	KO 4
May 3	Michael Birthmark, Worley, ID	KO 1
May 17	Anthony Cannon, Dorchester, MA	KO 4
June 28	Hector Hernandez, Boston	W 6
Aug. 22	Marcus Upshaw, Lincoln, RI	W 6
2009		
Jan. 17	Brad Austin, Biloxi, MS	KO 3
March 19	Patrick Thompson, Worcester, MA	KO 2
Aug. 13	Angel David Gonzales, Rochester, NY	KO3

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
11	11	0	0	8

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He Has A Title, But He Wants More ...

WILL AMIR KHAN BE THE NEW KING OF ENGLAND?

By Brian Doogan

Solicited by one of the multitude of boxing websites for his pound-for-pound top 10 a few months ago, Freddie Roach made several surprise selections. The top three were predictable in terms of distinction and order: Manny Pacquiao, Floyd Mayweather, and Juan Manuel Marquez. But Edwin Valero, Arthur Abraham, Mikkel Kessler, and Andre Ward at number four, number six, number seven, and number eight, respectively, were not.

"Some will question picking Valero, but he has 25 victories by kayo without a loss, and Arthur Abraham is a really tough puncher with quick hands and a concrete chin," argued Roach, Pacquiao's trainer since 2003. "Kessler's only loss was to former super middle and light heavyweight champ Joe Calzaghe, and he should wind up fighting Abraham for the super middleweight title, while Ward has great boxing skills and he looked very impressive against Edison Miranda."

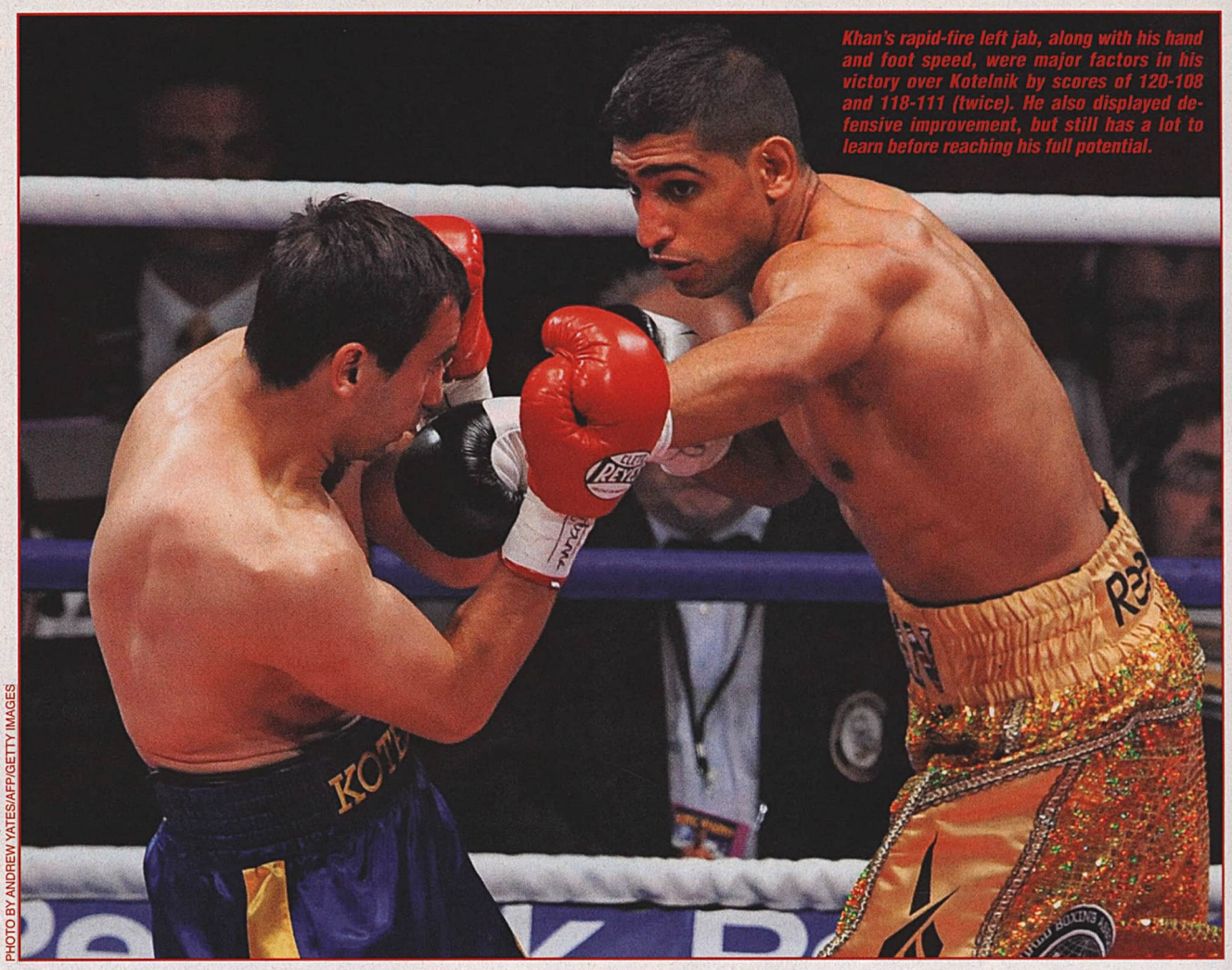
Sugar Shane Mosley and Israel Vasquez occupied the remaining places before Roach announced his number 10.

"I know that some will question Amir Khan being in the top 10, but trust me, he is the real deal," insisted Roach, who took Khan under his wing in October 2008, a matter of weeks after the fighter's brutal destruction at the hands of Colombian Breidis Prescott. "Like Manny, Amir is a great athlete. He's the only one who can keep up with Manny running in the morning. They both have a great work ethic and they want to learn. Sure, he got stopped by Breidis Prescott last September, but, if anyone in the world gets hit right, they will go. It's how they come back that counts. Now we're prepared not to make the mistakes that were made in that one fight and life goes on, that's the way it is. If he keeps progressing like he is, I truly believe that Amir can be my next superstar."

Khan reaffirmed Roach's faith in his potential when he demonstrated nerve, exciting offensive skills, and a newfound aptitude for defense against

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

A new and improved Khan has Kotelnik under pressure during their July 18 bout in Manchester, England. Khan won a unanimous decision to capture the WBA 140-pound title, the latest step in a rebuilding process that began following his kayo loss to Breidis Prescott.



Khan's rapid-fire left jab, along with his hand and foot speed, were major factors in his victory over Kotelnik by scores of 120-108 and 118-111 (twice). He also displayed defensive improvement, but still has a lot to learn before reaching his full potential.

PHOTO BY ANDREW YATES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

tough and seasoned veteran Andreas Kotelnik in claiming the Ukrainian's WBA junior welterweight title on July 18 at the MEN Arena in Manchester, England. But his victory by unanimous decision did not assuage all the doubts that have surrounded the 22-year-old boxer's rise from the incubator of Athens, where he became an Olympic silver medalist at the tender age of 17.

If Roach is boxing's Aristotle to Eddie Futch's Plato, then Khan still has many fields to conquer before he can be hailed as their Amir the Great. Certainly, there is a place on the battlefield for Britain's next great warrior following the retirement of Joe Calzaghe and the slow decline of Ricky Hatton, which culminated in "The Hitman's" swift denouement by Pacquiao. Whether Khan is better equipped to assume this mantle ahead of the braggadocios David Haye or the enigmatic Carl Froch, however, remains to be seen.

As a recognized personality and box-office draw, he surpasses both of them. Haye has yet to establish himself at heavyweight and Froch has not engaged in fights with opponents of such renown to transcend the sport. The majority of Khan's bouts have generated good numbers on terrestrial TV and 15,000 people were in attendance at the MEN Arena when he beat Marco Antonio Barrera, the 20th win of his four-year career.

But the business of boxing in Britain is changing fast, and the demise of subscription TV network Setanta, which had carved out a reputation as "the home of boxing" as it broadcast fight action from the United States and Europe, has had a demoralizing and destabilizing effect. Terrestrial broadcaster ITV, with whom Khan was associated before he became a pay-per-view attraction on Sky Box Office (damagingly, the Prescott bout was the first such venture), announced recently that it would not be in the market for boxing beyond the end of this year.

Less than 10,000 customers were inside the MEN Arena for Khan-Kotelnik (not bad in an economic recession that has hit Britain's high streets and industry hard), roughly 5,000 fewer than the Barrera bout just four months earlier. Moreover, reports suggested that less than 30,000 watched on Sky Box Office. The increasing marginalization of his sport, therefore, will not be the least of Khan's battles.

Not far from the surface, too, lurks the sinister threat of racial hatred stirred up by the likes of the British Nationalist Party, whose leader, Nick Griffin, believes that non-white people in Britain "are 'black residents' of the United Kingdom and are no more British than an Englishman living in Hong Kong is Chinese." Griffin further suggested that "collectively, foreign residents of other races should be referred to as 'racial foreigners'"

and declared unashamedly, "We don't subscribe to the politically correct fiction that just because they happen to be born in Britain, a Pakistani is a Briton. They're not. They remain of Pakistani stock."

Khan is a British Muslim whose father, Shah, arrived in Britain from Pakistan in the 1960s and, when asked how his party's policy would impact on a man who has boxed for Britain his whole life, Griffin replied simply that "perhaps we will lose one good boxer, but there are more important things."

Alas, Griffin's is not an isolated voice. The BNP leader was elected to the European Parliament in June for the North West of England region in which Khan's hometown of Bolton is situated. Latent racism and racism of a more overt nature have contributed unquestionably to the booing and heckling of Khan at the Prescott and Barrera bouts and also when he was introduced to the baying crowd before the Pacquiao-Hatton weigh-in at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

True, Khan lost a fight in an alarmingly conclusive manner, but the reaction in some quarters of British society was disturbing and ugly. Curiously, he is perceived by some people to be arrogant, and perhaps their delight as he received his comeuppance could be explained in this light, but anyone who has come into close contact with Khan can only vouch for a personality forged in the working-class roots of his native Bolton and the honest upbringing he received at home.

Crucially, the schooling he has received from Roach at the Wild Card Gym in Hollywood, California, is the single biggest factor in his rehabilitation and re-emergence as a future star. A long line of exciting prospects, of which Californian junior welterweight Victor Ortiz is the most recent example, have been thrown off-course by a shock ambush. The making of the man, as Roach emphasized, is determined by his response to adversity.

Khan's reaction was to make the biggest move of his life, not only seeking out the best teacher of his trade, but also accepting that it would be necessary to base himself more than 5,000 miles away from his family and friends when he had not even moved out of the family home. The anonymity with which he can go about his daily tasks from the solitude of his apartment above a Borders bookstore on Hollywood Boulevard is welcome relief for a young man whose celebrity in Britain was established from the moment he became one of the standout performers in the 2004 Olympic Games. But his extended exposure to life in the United States has engendered an eagerness to perform in an American ring.

"Amir could make his debut in the U.S. next, and Planet Hollywood owner Robert Earl, who is a friend of mine and hosted the Joe Calzaghe-Bernard Hopkins fight, wants him to fight in Las Vegas," revealed Frank Warren, who has promoted Khan since he made his debut in July 2005. "Another option is being part of the undercard to Pacquiao's clash with Miguel Cotto in November, which would give him good publicity but might not pay as well as other fights, while his mandatory is unbeaten New Yorker Dmitriy Salita.

"Everyone is talking about a Khan-Ricky Hatton fight, and from a business point of view, it makes sense. Not only would it generate big money, Khan would probably win. Yet if you really care about boxing, then it's not a great fight because Hatton should now be retired after suffering crushing defeats against Mayweather and Pacquiao."

If Khan does fight in America, will this adversely affect his prospects of becoming a star in Britain in the mold of Calzaghe or Hatton? Not if it means

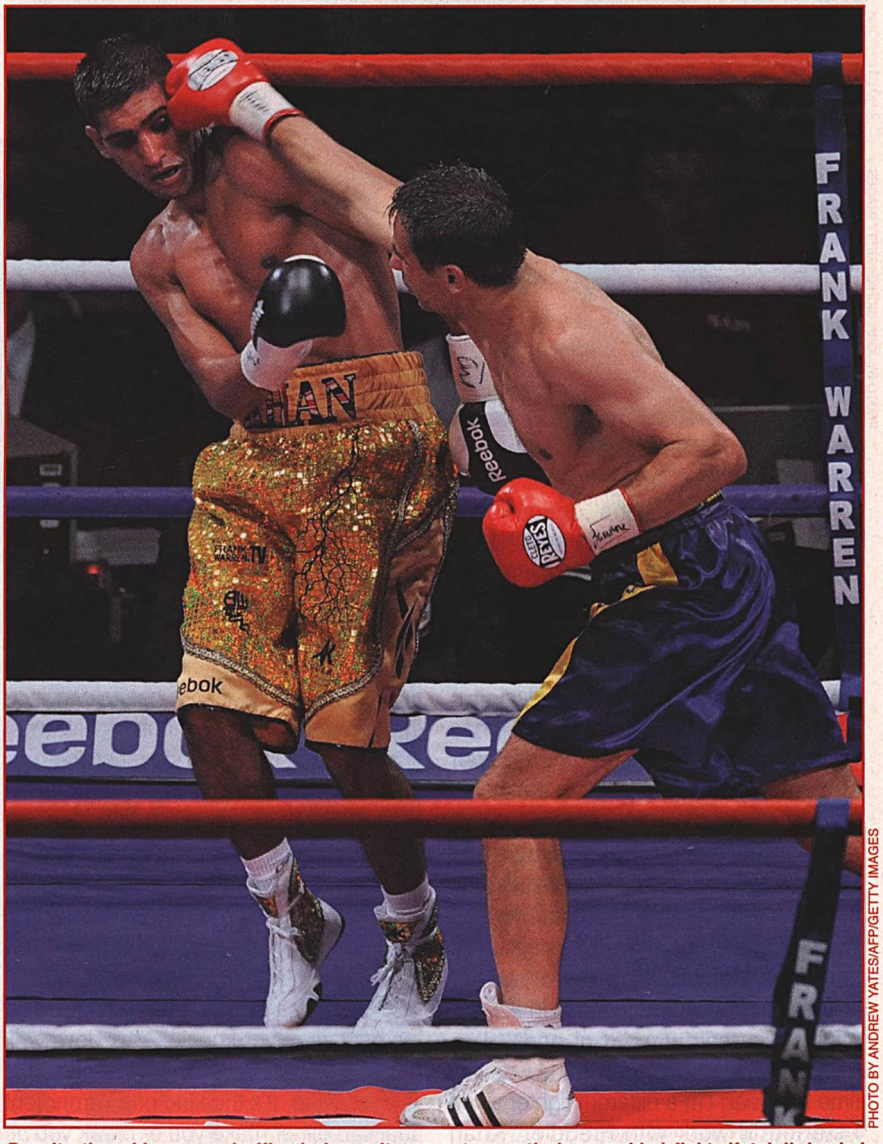


PHOTO BY ANDREW YATES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Despite the wide scores in Khan's favor, it was not an entirely one-sided fight. Kotelnik landed some good punches, but fortunately for Khan, the defending titleholder is not a devastating puncher. The British boxer was rocked a few times, but stayed on his feet.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Freddie Roach reaches for Khan's mouthpiece between rounds of the Kotelnik fight. Although they have only been working together for a short period of time, Roach has been able to rebuild Khan's confidence and noticeably improved his technique.

more hours away from the spotlight in the trusted hands of Roach. With boxing's best trainer so deeply invested in his development, Khan will only get better and mastery of a craft is frequently a guaranteed way of silencing critics.

"Amir has made real progress since we began working together shortly after his fight with Prescott—whom he should never have been in the ring with at that stage in his career, by the way—and he's a vastly improved fighter," Roach declared after a public workout by Khan in Manchester to drum up interest in his challenge of Kotelnik.

Neither is there any doubt in Khan's mind.

"I'm much savvier now than I was this time last year; I'm a different fighter since I started to work with Freddie," Khan reflected. "I always believed that I had the ability to beat anyone in the world, but you need the right team around to bring the best out of you and, for me, Freddie is the perfect guy to have in my corner.

"Moving my training camp to California was the best move of my career and, if it took a knockout loss to convince me to come here, I'm happy to live with that because I'm learning something new every day. I remember when I first sparred with Manny, I got my respect in the gym because I did well. In the Wild Card, you have to treat sparring like a fight because that's what Freddie tells you to do. If the other guy knocks you down, make sure you put him down. Freddie had bets of $1,000 for me to knock Manny down and he said whoever knocks Amir down will get $1,000. For the sparring partners, this is their living. It's the kind of environment that can either make you or break you as a fighter, and being there has been the making of me."

With Naseem Hamed at ringside to support his friend, Khan made an assured statement against Kotelnik. Fast combinations, solid defensive skills, and a well-honed counterpunching technique had been the hallmarks of the Ukrainian's unsung career. A silver medalist at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, where he was beaten by Cuban great Mario Kindelan (who also prevailed over Khan four years later), the 31-year-old Kotelnik's only previous defeats in 34 fights had come on points against former WBC junior welterweight titleholder Junior Witter and Souleymane M'baye in a bout that most observers thought Kotelnik won.

Still, with only 13 kayos among his 31 wins, Khan had no need to fear Kotelnik's punching ability and he took the fight to his opponent from the outset. His jab rattled regularly into Kotelnik's face in the opening rounds as the Ukrainian stayed mostly on the defensive. Khan's defense was solid and the lateral movement he employed to stay out of range when Kotelnik punched worked well. When he left his chin unprotected a couple of times, Roach warned him at the end of the round not to "lead with the right hand and work behind the jab."

Khan, 139¾, continued to box well in round two, but there were ominous signs when Kotelnik, 140, penetrated his guard more than once with his right hand. In one alarming exchange, the Ukrainian caught Khan with a right hand to the head along with two left hooks, and also landed another solid right hand before the round was over. Khan's chin was tested further in round three, and Kotelnik mixed in bodyshots, too, as the challenger allowed his foe more latitude to get off with his punches.

Khan's punch output dropped in the fourth, and Kotelnik took advantage by attacking to the head and body. Khan was encouraged to cover up and get on his bicycle, circling to his right and away from his opponent's right hand. Kotelnik landed a right and a follow-up straight left, both of which appeared to rattle the challenger. But Khan came back strongly in round five, using his legs to avoid getting caught and pumping out his jab to score points.

Boxing on the back foot, Khan picked off his opponent impressively in the middle rounds and, with his work-rate restored, he was clearly in charge. A right uppercut and left hook combination to the head of Kotelnik confirmed Khan's superiority, and when the Ukrainian responded with a left hook to the head, he got countered immediately by a sharp battery of blows. Khan's confidence was reflected in the guttural roar of the crowd that was, this time, staunchly pro-Khan.

Kotelnik remained dangerous, however, and more than once in the ninth Khan was struck flush on the chin with the left hook and right hand. Khan threw more punches, but the Ukrainian's counterpunching ability made him dangerous still, and he won the round. Although Khan outworked Kotelnik in the 10th and 11th rounds, the 31-year-old titleholder remained strong and

A retired Naseem Hamed congratulates Khan on his victory. Whether or not Khan can eventually become the massive box-office attraction that Hamed was before he hung up his gloves in 2002 remains to be seen.

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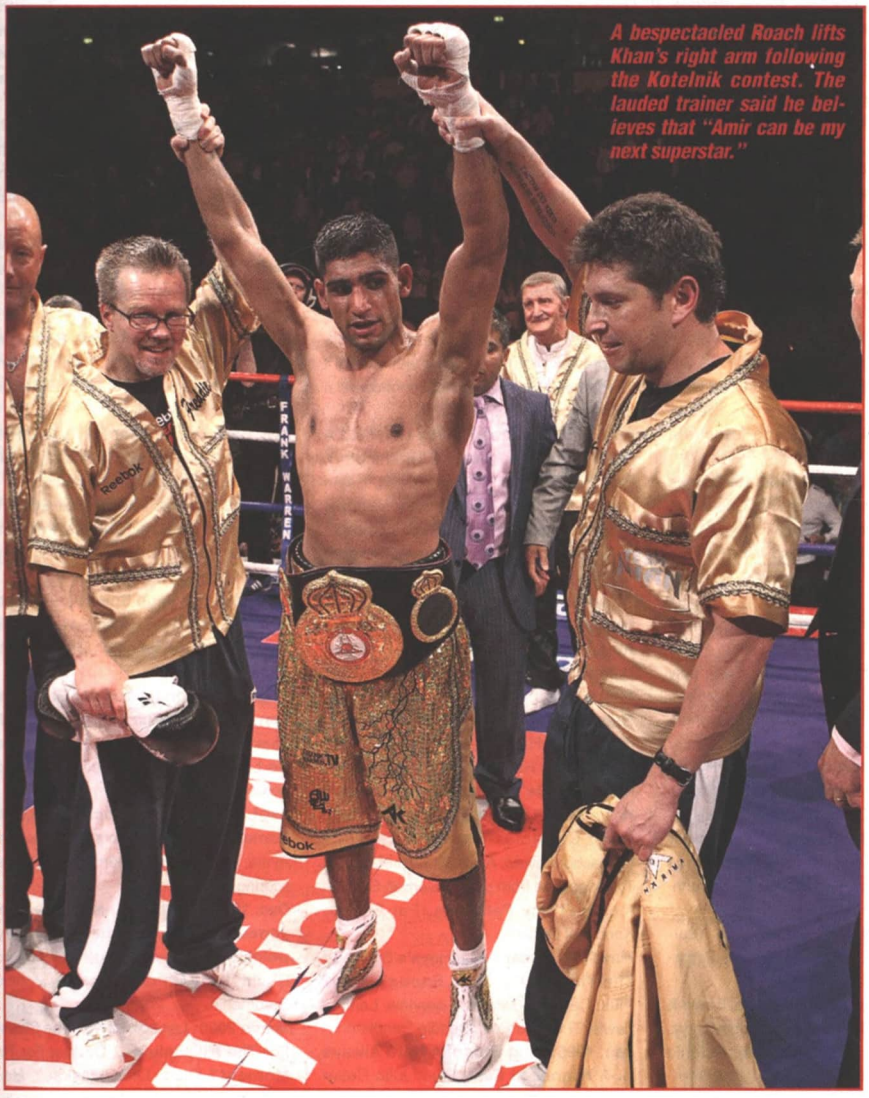

A bespectacled Roach lifts Khan's right arm following the Kotelnik contest. The lauded trainer said he believes that "Amir can be my next superstar."

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

the final round became a stern test of Khan's resolve. Kotelnik realized that he needed a knockout to win, but his sustained assault lacked the required accuracy, so Khan was able to box and avoid most of Kotelnik's crude punches before the final bell ignited an outpouring of joy from Khan, his cornermen, and supporters.

"When I made the fight I always felt Amir's speed of hand and foot would get him through, and I was proved right," said Warren. "One judge gave him every round, and it was difficult to argue with that. Yet Kotelnik was always dangerous and he posed a threat right until the very end. In Freddie Roach, Khan has a trainer he's got confidence in, and you can see the improvement to his defense that he's made in the gym since the Prescott defeat. After that knockout everyone wrote Amir off, but I always felt he could become a champion."

While there may be some heart-in-the-mouth crises to come, Khan is increasingly equipped to withstand these, thanks to the professor in his corner. Maybe Roach will not be the only one with Khan in his mythical pound-for-pound top 10 when they are done. ■

Brian Doogan, THE RING's European correspondent, was ringside in Manchester, England, for Khan-Kotelnik.

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HAS PAC-MAN MAXED OUT?

Bigger, Stronger, Younger Cotto Presents Formidable Challenge

By William Dettloff

Manny Pacquiao's most remarkable trait might be his humility, which by now is seen as almost legendary. Despite his myriad successes, which need no recounting here, he continues to comport himself with the quiet modesty of a Tibetan monk or migrant farm worker. No posturing, no boasting, no trace of the type of conceit that marks so many people of achievement.

The world's best prizefighter gives the impression that, as he sees it, he is a simple man who, through some stroke of luck or accident or blessing from God, happens to be better than anyone in the world at what he does. And it's nothing to brag about.

This is noteworthy mostly because we've all come in contact at some time or another with the guy who becomes a pompous, insufferable know-it-all as a result of his promotion to night manager at the Piggly Wiggly, or to the head of the customer service department at some god-awful little insurance company or used car dealership.

We all want to be stars, and many are those who judge their worth by the number of people they can simultaneously make miserable when the mood strikes them. This is not Manny Pacquiao.

But let's not kid ourselves. There is an unstated arrogance that all great achievers must possess that propels them past the doubts and insecurities all of us grapple with, and without which they would be as mediocre as the rest of us.

The danger is that this self-belief becomes a kind of hubris that can lead to the downfall not only of unscrupulous politicians, for example, but also of superstar prizefighters who forget that they, too, can be beaten. This is the possibility that animates any conversation concerning Pacquiao's upcoming showdown with Miguel Cotto, which is scheduled for November 14 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

The American author and humorist, Arnold H. Glasow, called conceit "the quicksand of human success," but you can't blame Pacquiao if he feels invincible. His three last fights—resounding kayo wins over David Diaz, Oscar De La Hoya, and Ricky Hatton—were each masterpieces in their own way, and each orchestrated at weights many thought would prove beyond even Pacquiao's explosive reach.

Indeed, it seems silly in retrospect that some warned he would be too small for Diaz a lightweight, considering that afterward he steamrolled De La Hoya and Hatton at weights even higher and in even easier fashion.

The danger here, of course, is that Cotto, even with his flaws (which we will get at a bit later) is no Diaz, De La Hoya, or Hatton. In fact, taken together, to many, the three represent a fairly dubious trio.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Critical comparison: In their most recent fights prior to their November 14 showdown, Cotto had to overcome a cut eye and a strong challenge from Joshua Clottey before finally prevailing via close decision (opposite page), while Pacquiao breezed to an easy second-round knockout of Ricky Hatton (right).

PHOTO BY JAY DIRECTO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Despite his iconic status in the Philippines and his exploding popularity throughout the world, Pacquiao has remained a man of the people.

One Move Too Many

That Manny Pacquiao has gone from competing at 106 pounds to 140-plus and appears better than ever is one of the remarkable feats in recent history. There is cause for concern, though: Some of the great fighters in the history of boxing kept moving up and up until they hit that weight at which they could no longer be successful, and everything came crashing down—in some cases permanently. Here are seven guys who should have known better.

•The way he kept flattening guys at featherweight, junior lightweight, and lightweight, who could blame **Alexis Arguello** for wanting to try his hand at junior welter? Unfortunately for him, his best right-hand bombs didn't budge 140-pound king Aaron Pryor, who for all intents and purposes ended Arguello's career when he stopped him in 14 rounds.

•The great **Sugar Ray Robinson** was unbeatable at welterweight and still the best fighter in the world at middleweight. Why wouldn't he be just as sweet at 175 against Joey Maxim, the light heavyweight champ? Well, he was—until the 13th round. Ahead on all three scorecards, he succumbed to heat prostration after the round and surrendered in his corner, the only kayo loss of his career.

•There were guys walking around in the late-1930s who wouldn't have been surprised to see **Henry Armstrong** give heavyweight champ Joe Louis a run for his money. But even "Hammerin' Hank" had his limit. After winning titles at featherweight, lightweight, and welterweight, Armstrong finally hit the wall against middleweight champ Ceferino Garcia. The best Armstrong could manage was a disputed draw.

•It wasn't until he jumped up from lightweight that everyone realized how wonderfully skilled **Roberto Duran** was. The problem was Duran realized it, too, and kept right on eating and winning, taking titles at welterweight and junior middleweight. Though he beat Iran Barkley for a title at 160, and had given Marvelous Marvin Hagler trouble during a title shot, he was never consistently effective at the weight.

•Armstrong wasn't the only guy to max out at 160. After winning titles at lightweight, junior welterweight, welterweight, and junior middleweight, **Oscar De La Hoya** tried to bring his golden touch to middleweight. He flopped, winning a disputed verdict over the ordinary Felix Sturm and getting stopped by Bernard Hopkins.

•The great welterweight and middleweight **Mickey Walker** was known for his toughness and his ability to outwork and outfight bigger, stronger fighters, even heavyweights. But if you keep pushing the envelope against bigger guys, sooner or later one pushes back and that's what happened when Max Schmeling obliterated "The Toy Bulldog" in one of the more brutal fights of the early-1930s.

•It's hard to imagine that 130 pounds would be too big for anyone, but it was for **Jeff Fenech**, who, during his brief and frenetic career, won titles at bantamweight, junior featherweight, and featherweight, but had a draw and a kayo loss to junior lightweight great Azumah Nelson and then suffered kayo at the hands of Calvin Grove.

—W.D.

Diaz, at his best, is scrappy and willing, but generally harmless to a top-flight fighter such as Pacquiao. Against a very shopworn Erik Morales, he was life and death. De La Hoya, at 35 years old and semi-retired, probably was shot even before he over-trained for Pacquiao and came in too light. And Hatton, despite being the world junior welterweight champion, couldn't have been a better target for Pacquiao's sharp-shooting had he strolled into their fight with an oversized bull's eye taped to his chin and his hands tied behind his back.

One-time welterweight titleholder Carlos Palomino, who fought at 147 for virtually his entire career, questions whether Pacquiao is big enough to beat a legitimate welterweight. He is especially derisive of De La Hoya and Hatton and doesn't feel as though Pacquiao's victories proved as much as they appeared.

"Oscar made a huge mistake. He left that fight in the gym," Palomino told THE RING. "I still can't understand how somebody who's been in the gym since he was five years old doesn't know his body and doesn't know that he can't ask it to perform at that level when he doesn't have any carbohydrates or energy and gained only two pounds after the weigh-in.

"And Ricky Hatton, I don't know what the hell he was doing in preparation for that fight. I was shocked at how easily Pacquiao took care of him."

Not everyone holds this view. ESPN's Brian Kenny, studio host of the long-running *Friday Night Fights* series and perhaps the busiest man in sports media, told THE RING he's not one to indulge in revisionist history.

"Hatton didn't suddenly turn into a bum the day before the fight," Kenny said. "After seeing Pacquiao against De La Hoya and Hatton, the way he chopped them both up, you have to say he's done everything to put himself in the position he's in. You can't go back and say those guys just made him look good. Everybody makes him look good."

Still, in Cotto, 34-1 (27), Pacquiao will find himself in with a heavy-handed, well-schooled and versatile boxer-puncher who is at or close to his prime, has been in enough hard fights to have proved his mettle, and who has beaten Shane Mosley, the very fighter whom Pacquiao's brain trust has deftly avoided despite Mosley's very public calls for a superfight.

Moreover, Cotto has fought at two weights since turning pro in 2001: junior welterweight and welterweight. He is considered by most to be unusually strong and tough for any welterweight to handle, never mind one who not terribly long ago was fighting lightweights. This

Robinson weighed only 157½ for his failed bid to take the light heavy title from Maxim

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Cotto (pictured working out in a plastic sweat suit for the Clottey fight) will have to shed a few extra pounds to face Pacquiao at a catch weight of 145.

It's Not Always Weight

Pacquiao should take comfort from the examples of these over-eaters, whose careers ended badly or are in the process of ending badly not because they climbed too high in weight, but because boxing careers end badly in general.

•We all should have known something was wrong when the ridiculously skilled middleweight **James Toney** was struggling to beat nonentities like David Tiberi. Turns out it was because he was starving himself. Toney listened eventually to his inner heavyweight and scored some good wins at 220-plus, but only after winning titles at super middleweight and cruiserweight. He's awful now not because he's a heavyweight, but because he's 40 and his reflexes are shot.

•He'll swear to the end that all his problems began when he came back down from heavyweight, but beating John Ruiz for a piece of the heavyweight title made **Roy Jones**—one-time middleweight titleholder—a living legend, or close to it. Now that he's 40 and nearly at the end (we can hope, can't we?), we should remember that he looked as good at 193 pounds against Ruiz as he did at 175 for all those light heavyweight title defenses. It wasn't the weight that did him in, it was the same thing that gets all of us: middle age.

• Be bored all you want by **Chris Byrd**, but at his best this middleweight in a heavyweight's body made an awful lot of big, strong guys look damn foolish, and he made some good money at the same time. What more could you want in a career? Byrd put on about 40 pounds after he turned pro and was still giving up 25, 30 pounds to the giants of the heavyweight division—and sometimes beating them. His lack of great size wasn't his weakness—it was his greatest asset because it animated his speed. When he got older and dropped back down to 175, he lost that advantage.

•Considering how high the highs were, it ended badly for **Julio Cesar Chavez** even by boxing standards, but it was never because he went too high in weight. Even though he won his first title at junior lightweight and in his final fight weighed in at 146—a difference of 16 pounds and titles in three divisions—it was age that betrayed "The Lion Of Culiacan," not excess pounds.

•Sure, the super middleweight and light heavyweight titles he won by starching Donny Lalonde were a sham, but the fact remains that **Ray Leonard** weighed 165 pounds the night he did it, or 24 pounds more than he weighed for his pro debut 11 years prior. Leonard also won titles at welterweight, junior middleweight, and middleweight, of course, and the embarrassment he became later on was never the result of moving up in weight. It was the result of aging.

—W.D.

reality is not lost on Pacquiao's trainer, the revered Freddie Roach.

"I know Cotto's a big, strong guy and I worry about that at times, but Manny is very strong also at this weight. I think it's a wonderful fight for us. I think it's our toughest fight to date and a much tougher test than Oscar or Hatton," Roach told THE RING.

Though Roach and Pacquiao, 49-3-2 (37), tried to neutralize Cotto's size advantage by requiring that the fight be contested at 145 pounds rather than the welterweight limit of 147, no matter what they do Cotto will be the bigger man. But at this point, does that matter anymore?

"Now that we've seen him beat guys at that weight, it seems so plausible [that he can beat Cotto]," Kenny observed. "If we hadn't already seen him beat De La Hoya and Hatton, all we'd be talking about is the weight. But we're not, because he beat those guys already and is so on his game right now."

Very big fights like this are intriguing only when there are significant questions that exist about both fighters. For Pacquiao it's how will he perform against the biggest fighter he will have faced and probably the best one, save Juan Manuel Marquez. But Pacquiao isn't the only one with questions going in. Cotto has one, too, and it's this: Has his big moment come too late?

Consider: Cotto has been in some wars. Probably too many for a kid just 28 years old (can he really be that young?). You can count them. Ricardo Torres. Mosley. Zab Judah. Antonio Margarito. Joshua Clottey. Even the Demarcus Corley fight was hairy. These were fights in which Cotto was wobbled, battered, cut, and, against Margarito, convinced to submit. He was probably a hair away from losing to Clottey and now, in the biggest fight of his career on the biggest stage he has been on, he may already be past his best.

Roach, for one, thinks that could be the case. Asked to assess Cotto's performance last time out against Clottey, the trainer said, "Cotto did okay. The fight was there for the taking by Clottey, but he didn't assert himself. I thought Cotto won the fight very close. But I don't think he was quite the same guy that I saw before the Margarito fight. He showed signs of a little wear and tear."

Lest he risk his fighter becoming complacent, Roach was quick to add: "I think this is a good fight for Manny, but obviously a tough fight. I don't look at it as an easy fight whatsoever and I look for Cotto to come out at his best."

One-time junior featherweight champion Paulie Ayala told THE RING that all the wars Cotto has had would not serve him well against a speed-demon like Pacquiao, who is 30.

"Cotto is only 28, but in ring age he's a lot older than Pacquiao," Ayala said. "Pacquiao hasn't taken the kind

PHOTO BY MARC SEROTA/GETTY IMAGES

In the end it was age—not excess flab—that turned Toney into a loser

of beatings that Cotto has, even in his tougher fights. He's never taken the volume of punches that Cotto has."

You can make the argument that Pacquiao has his share of wars too—the two against Marquez come to mind, as do the first two battles with Morales. Ayala doesn't think they compare and likes Pacquiao to win.

"I absolutely think Pacquiao will win, just because of his speed and volume punching," said Ayala. "His power is just as devastating at this weight, plus I know Freddie Roach from when he trained [Johnny] Tapia for our first fight. Pacquiao's speed will be too much, and his accuracy is better than it's ever been."

Though many saw bad signs for Cotto in the Clottey fight, for others, the hard-fought win reaffirmed some things about Puerto Rico's favorite son (after Felix Trinidad, of course).

"The beatdown like the one Cotto took against Margarito will take something out of any fighter," Kenny said. "It diminished him a little. But against Clottey, he showed a lot of heart. You have to remember how good Clottey is, and while Cotto looked very hittable, he was more hittable after the cut. And he could have taken the easy way out. He didn't."

Palomino thinks, too, that Cotto bounced back well against his first top-tier opponent following the loss to Margarito (Cotto stopped under-qualified Brit Michael Jennings in his first post-Margarito outing) and that he'll do well against Pacquiao.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

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The metamorphosis of Manny: On the left is Pacquiao weighing 125 pounds the night he stopped Marco Antonio Barrera in November 2003. On the right is Pac-Man two weeks before he stopped Hatton officially weighing 138 pounds for their May 2, 2009, bout. Pacquiao turned pro at 106.

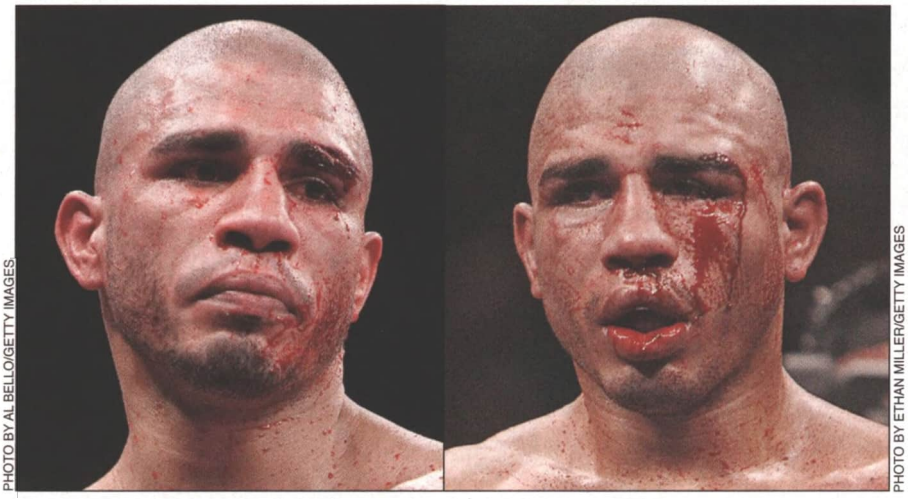
"I was a little concerned about the beating he took against Margarito, that he might not be the same, but I think he's changed his style a little. Or maybe it's because he fought two guys who put on a lot of pressure, but I was impressed at how he boxed and moved and had good hand speed," Palomino said.

"I believe Cotto will be a little too strong. I'm still not sold on Pacquiao being able to truly beat a full-fledged welterweight. Cotto is very strong, very dangerous. Pacquiao is, too, but I just don't feel like he can beat a legitimate 147-pounder. I still see a small guy who's very talented, and I love his hand speed and conditioning, but I still have doubts about how he can beat a legitimate welterweight."

Also in Cotto's favor is the simple matter that the type of fighter that has proven to give him the most trouble—the tall, strong, concrete-chinned volume puncher that is epitomized by Margarito and Clottey—is nothing like Pacquiao. That's not him. Pacquiao's slashing, power-punching style may be bad for Cotto, too, but we haven't seen it so far.

We would do well to consider the possibility that this is a game more than any other in which your most recent contest sets public opinion as to the outcome of your next one. That in many ways Cotto looked very vulnerable against Clottey does not necessarily mean he will look similarly vulnerable against Pacquiao, especially considering how dissimilar Pacquiao and Clottey's styles are.

As good as Cotto is—and he's very good—it's not hard to envision Pacquiao's blazing hands leading him to a win here in another magnificent, bloody fight that we will be hard-pressed to forget, and that will challenge even Pacquiao's legendary humility. ■



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Cotto suffered serious cuts in both the Clottey (left) and Margarito (right) fights. How big of a factor these old wounds will be against Pacquiao remains to be seen.

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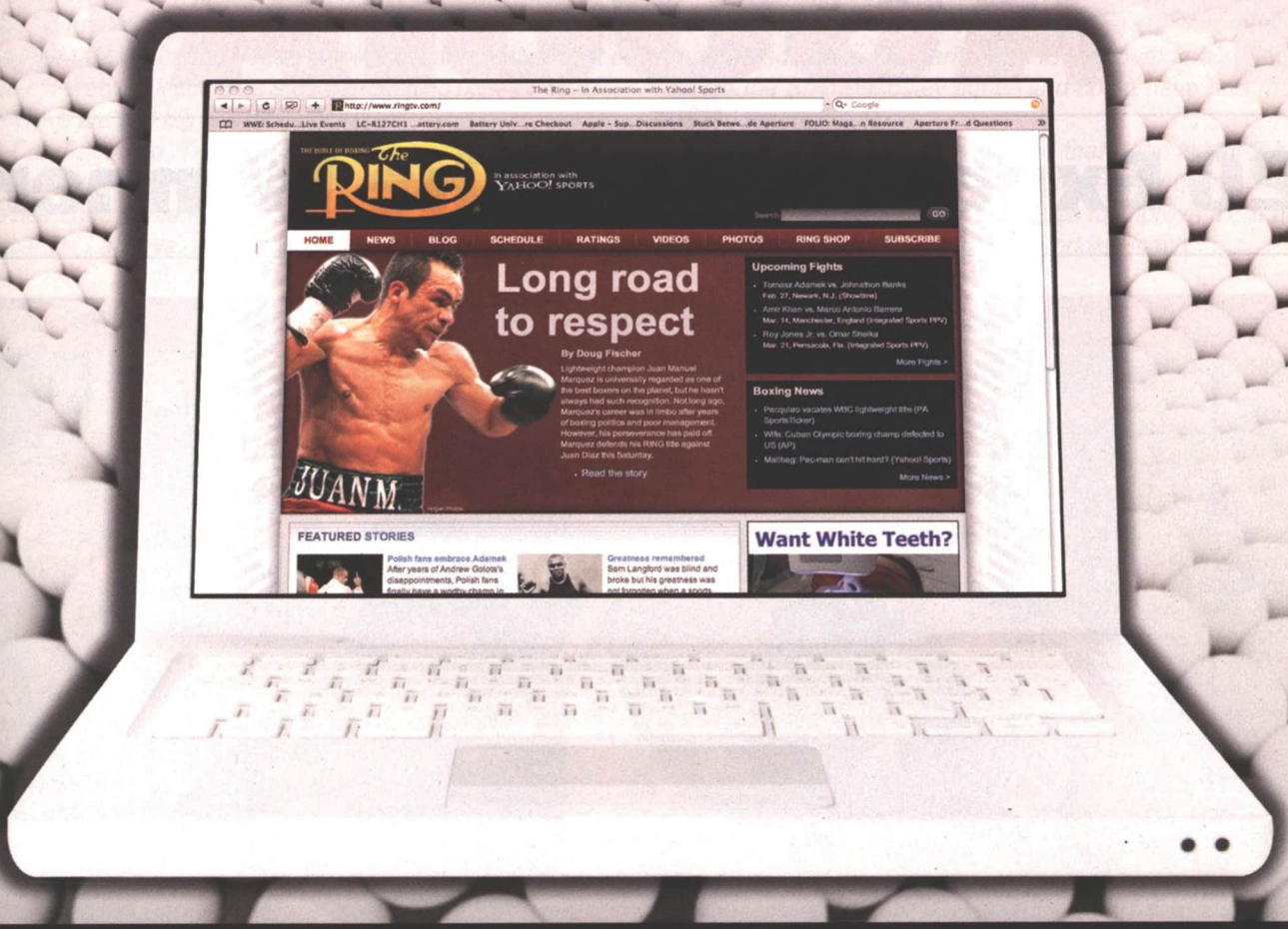

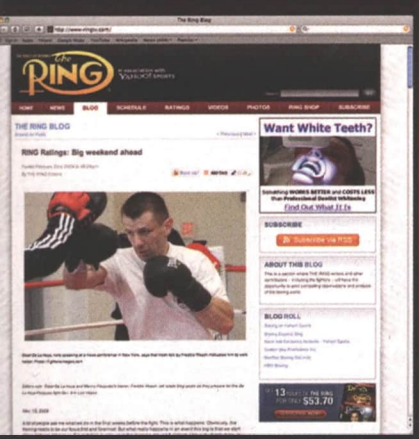

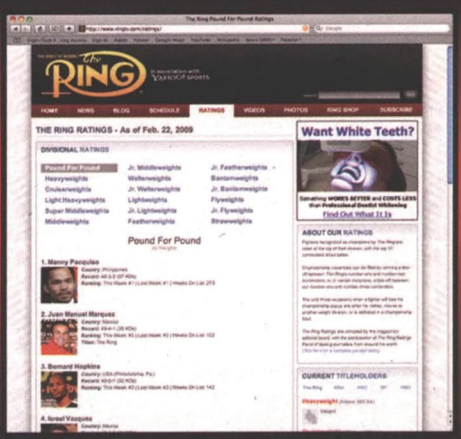

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COTTO vs. PACQUIAO

20 Experts Pick The Winner

Compiled by Joseph Santoliquito

The last time we saw Manny Pacquiao in the ring he was walking away from the concussed and supine body of Ricky Hatton. The last time we saw Miguel Cotto in the ring, he was in a demanding struggle against Joshua Clottey, leaking blood and needing a strong finish to eke out a spit decision victory.

But despite the diverse manner in which Pacquiao and Cotto won their most recent bouts, their November 14 showdown at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas is the most anticipated fight of 2009. Moreover, it could be a career-defining fight for both.

There are two big questions going in:

Can Pacquiao, THE RING junior welterweight world champion, step up once again to defeat a naturally larger man, as he has done in his three previous fights against David Diaz, Oscar De La Hoya, and Hatton?

Can Cotto, THE RING's number-two welterweight contender, overcome the punishment he took in the Antonio Margarito fight—a defeat that still seems to hover over him like a ghost—and the nasty cut he suffered against Clottey?

Some argue that "Pac-Man's" current streak is actually hollow, filled with name fighters with diminished skills (De La Hoya), limited ability (Diaz), or were simply tailor-made for him (Hatton). And that Cotto, 34-1 (27), is still theoretically undefeated, since Margarito was found loading his gloves before the Shane Mosley fight—and could have had them loaded against Cotto.

On the other hand, many believe that Cotto is starting to slip due to the wear and tear of a number of grueling bouts, while Pacquiao, 49-3-2 (37), continues to improve more and more under the tutelage of trainer Freddie Roach.

PHOTOS BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

The world will find out who is correct in a superfight that not only promises to be exciting, but may also determine the destiny of both men.

In order to provide a broad-based perspective, THE RING polled 20 experts from the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, and asked them to predict the outcome. Some of the answers may surprise you. Here is what they had to say:

Nick Charles (*ShoBox* blow-by-blow announcer): "I think it's such a live fight. It's not about Pacquiao going up in weight; it will be about Cotto handling Pacquiao's speed. Cotto handled Mosley's speed well. But since the Mosley fight, Cotto hasn't done anything distinctive. I thought there was a point when the weight increases would be an issue with Manny, but it hasn't been. You know Cotto will want to come forward, and the key for Pacquiao will be to box early, build a lead, and then hang on. I have to go Pacquiao by split decision."

J. Michael Falgoust (*USA Today* boxing writer): "I can see Cotto stopping Pacquiao in the eighth round. I say that primarily because people are underestimating Cotto. Pacquiao has had three advantages, speed, power, and physical strength over all the guys he's faced. He only has one in this fight, and that's his speed. Cotto in my mind is unbeaten. It's a huge mistake for Pacquiao's people that they took this fight. Cotto is not only the best fighter Pacquiao has ever faced, he can hurt him if he catches him. I do need to say this: If Pacquiao can do to Cotto what he did to Hatton—Pacquiao is an all-time great pound-for-pounder, because that would remarkable."

Bernard Fernandez (*Philadelphia Daily News* boxing writer): "That's a tougher call than people expect. If I had to pick a winner, there's a shaky vote for Pacquiao, fighting a naturally larger man. He's played the role of giant killer already and seems pretty adept at it. I don't, however, think Pac-Man knocks him out. Pacquiao wins on points."

Andre Berto (welterweight contender): "I say Pacquiao, just because Cotto is pretty stationary and Pacquiao has mastered the art of keeping his distance and throwing combinations. I just don't think Miguel Cotto's face will hold up. He's been pretty cut up in his last few fights. Cotto is definitely the bigger and stronger guy, but Pacquiao can hit you right on the mark, and Cotto is right there to be hit. Pacquiao by late-round stoppage."

Timothy Bradley (junior welterweight contender): "The weight is the only thing that bothers me about this fight. Cotto has to come down, and that will weaken him. Cotto gets big between fights, going up to 160, 165 pounds. I'm going with Pac-Man in this fight. A lot of people don't realize how tough that is to suck up those two pounds. Besides, Cotto didn't look like the same Cotto against Clottey. Pacquiao will use a lot of speed punching and angles to beat Cotto by decision, because I absolutely don't think he'll stop Cotto."

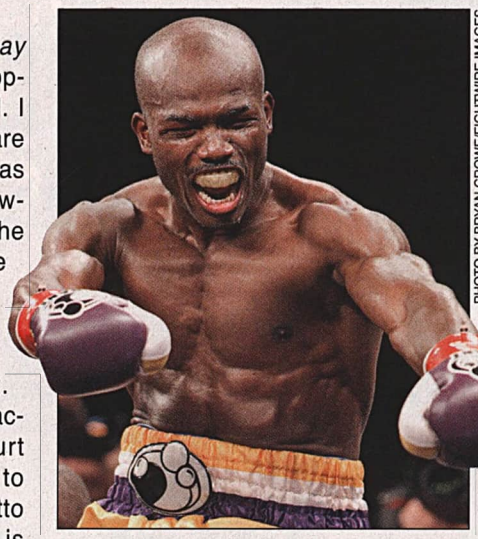


PHOTO BY BRYAN CROWE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Junior welterweight contender Timothy Bradley likes Pac-Man to beat Cotto. "Desert Storm" feels that Cotto dropping two pounds to make the catchweight limit of 145 could have an effect on the outcome, and that Pacquiao will decision Cotto.

Brian Kenny (ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* studio host): "Pacquiao by decision. I've always admired Cotto's toughness and his methodical style, but I think Pac is too fast, too sharp, too accurate, and too busy. I just think he'll win rounds. It will be an exciting, action fight, but I don't see it being razor close. I see as it an eight-to-four sort of a fight for Pacquiao."

Carlos Gonzalez (*Primera Hora* boxing writer): "I understand that Manny is without a doubt the best boxer in the world right now. But I think people are giving him too much credit for beating a very old Oscar De La Hoya and he caught Ricky Hatton very flatfooted. Miguel will be the bigger and stronger fighter. Dropping to 145 pounds won't have that much effect on Miguel. Plus, Cotto does fight very well against lefthanders because he is naturally left handed. My heart says Cotto, but my mind says Pacquiao. I'll go with my heart and say Miguel by decision. Pacquiao will have no defense for body punching."

Joe Tessitore (ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* blow-by-blow announcer): "I think Cotto is just over the crest, and even though his ascent was tremendous over the last few years, he's just on the other side of that. The Clottey fight was somewhat revealing. I know for a fact where Manny Pacquiao is, but I question where Miguel Cotto is right now. I see a Pacquiao by decision."

Jorge Perez (*Lel Nuevo Dia* boxing writer): "It's a tough fight, but I tend to think that Pacquiao made a mistake in making this fight with Cotto, thinking he has another Ricky Hatton or Oscar De La Hoya. Cotto is stronger and younger than Pacquiao, and besides being stronger and a good puncher, he can also turn left handed. It will be a question of Cotto being too strong. He is also able to do more than one thing. There's no question Pacquiao is a great fighter and he's proven he can punch, regardless of the weight. But Cotto is too powerful. I feel Cotto will win, and it wouldn't surprise me if he stopped Pacquiao in the eighth or ninth round."

Darius Ortiz (ESPN.com boxing editor): "I like Pacquiao by knockout in the ninth or 10th round. I don't think Cotto is the same fighter after the Margarito fight. I actually think Clottey could have stopped Cotto if he keeps his hands going. If this were Cotto before the

Margarito fight, I'd have to go with Cotto. But right now Pacquiao is something truly special."

David Diaz (former WBC lightweight titleholder, who lost the belt to Pacquiao): "Based on last performances only, Cotto didn't look that good without his uncle [training him], and I don't know if that had anything to do with his performance against Clottey. I have to go with Pac-Man again. I see this going the distance and I see it pretty close. If Cotto does catch Pacquiao, I think he can hurt him. But that's just it—he'll have to be able to catch him. Pacquiao by split decision."

Paulie Malignaggi (junior welterweight contender): "I think this is a fight that Manny is definitely trying to bite off more than he can chew. I know he beat Oscar De La Hoya, but you can make the argument that Oscar was pretty shot by then. Cotto's punches hurt, believe me I felt them. I don't know if Manny can take that from such a bigger guy who's close to the top of his game. Cotto wins by decision in a great fight."

Hiram Torroca (*El Nuevo Ovia* boxing writer): "Cotto has the power and Manny has the quickness. The advantage for Cotto will be the power of his punches, especially his left hook. If Cotto can reach him with his left hook, he can beat him. I see it as a very tough fight, but Cotto wins because Manny never felt a real welterweight's punch. I see Cotto eventually stopping Pacquiao in the ninth, 10th, or 11th round."

Dave Wilcox (Dailysports.com boxing writer) I'm done doubting Manny Pacquiao. Cotto presents a challenge for Manny. Unfortunately for Cotto, Pacquiao is not of this earth. Manny's already amazing speed seems twice as fast at the higher weights. As the fight hits the middle rounds, the bloodied and battered Cotto will start slowing, and Pacquiao will win by ninth-round stoppage."

Ronnie Nathanielsz (*Manila Standard* boxing writer): "This is the fight that worries me the most. Manny has been doing just about everything else except getting in shape, while Cotto is already quietly working out. That could tell on Manny as the years go by, and despite his confidence, his innate skill and courage, he can be vulnerable. Cotto is much tougher than a fading and withered De La Hoya or a poorly trained Hatton. I'll still go with Pacquiao, but certainly won't write Cotto off as some form of bothersome 'lice,' as Pacquiao jokes in playing around with what Cotto's name means in Filipino. Pacquiao should win in the end, or a nation will weep."

Naazim Richardson (trainer of Shane Mosley and Bernard Hopkins): "That's a rough one. I'm not one who believes that Pacquiao is as small a man as they say. I thought Pacquiao was actually bigger than Oscar. Cotto making 145 scares me. It's why I can see Pacquiao surviving the fight and stealing it, because I still don't see him as a little man. Pacquiao can Cotto hit, but I don't know if Pacquiao will be there for Cotto. Pacquiao by decision."

Bill Calogero (host of *Talkin' Boxing With Billy C*): "I think it has the makings of an all-time great fight. Cotto will try to fight in close to offset Pac-Man's speed. Cotto has the power to work on Manny and break him down. But Manny will be ready for Cotto and his speed and power will be too much for him to handle. Pac-Man wins a great fight to further add to his legacy."

Steve Farhood (*ShoBox* boxing analyst): "I like Pacquiao. Then again, at this point, I'd pick Pac to terrorize the Taliban. I don't know if I've ever seen a top-level fighter who continues to get better after having established himself as boxing's best fighter, but Pac-Man has been doing just that. He's not as physically strong as Cotto, but he's much faster, and I could see him scoring a stoppage on cuts. As usual, Freddie Roach's game plan will be critical. Expect distance and in-and-out movement. I'm not ready to bet against the Pacquiao/Roach team just yet. Pacquiao in nine."

Kendall Holt (junior welterweight contender): "Cotto will end up stopping him, because he's too big and too strong. Cotto has shown he can deal with the fastest fighters in the world, beating Zab Judah and Shane Mosley. Pacquiao beat a dried up Oscar De La Hoya, and Ricky Hatton was made for him. Pacquiao's victories definitely fooled the general public. I see Cotto stopping Pacquiao in the ninth round."

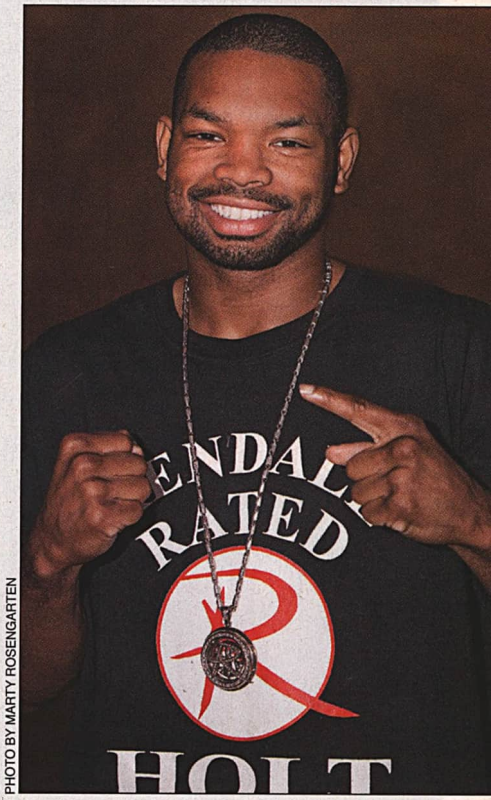


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Kendall Holt is favoring Cotto. The New Jersey-based junior welterweight feels the natural size difference between the two will be more of a plus for Cotto, saying "I can see Cotto stopping Pacquiao in the ninth round."

Scott Mallon (THE RING's Thailand correspondent): "Cotto will have his hands full and should hold his own in the first half of the bout, likely having his moments, but as the fight progresses, Pacquiao's hand and foot speed will prove to be decisive. Pacquiao will pick apart the Puerto Rican. As Cotto weakens, Pac-Man will grow stronger, once again demonstrating why he is the pound-for pound king. Pacquiao via ninth-round TKO."

Final Tally: Pacquiao 14, Cotto 6. ■

HOW SUPER WILL THE "SUPER SIX" REALLY BE?

Five of the so-called super six pose at the New York City press conference to announce Showtime's 168-pound tournament. They are (from left to right): Carl Froch, Mikkel Kessler, Arthur Abraham, Andre Dirrell, and Jermain Taylor.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

The Ring Looks At The Checkered History Of Boxing Tournaments

By Don Stradley

When Showtime first announced its "Super Six World Boxing Classic," a sprawling, epic, whopper of a tournament that begins in October and takes us right up to June 2011, commentator Gus Johnson blared in his best AM radio morning voice, "This is the best news for boxing fans in decades."

Although we've long suspected Johnson of being born without the gene for subtlety, he was merely following the tone set by Ken Hershman, Showtime's senior vice president.

"We are going to pull off one of the most exciting events in boxing history," said Hershman, who apparently knows nothing of Joe Louis or Max Schmeling.

Generally there are two scenarios behind a boxing tournament:

(1) A promoter, it could be Don King, although sometimes it's Cedric Kushner, has a bunch of fighters in the same weight class under contract.

(2) A network executive, believing he's the first to come up with the idea, thinks a tournament will create interest among bored fans. (This brainstorm usually comes while watching the World Series or Wimbledon.)

The next step is to trot out the fighters like show ponies, which is what Showtime did on July 13 when five of the six chosen super middleweights assembled at New York's Madison Square Garden for a formal press conference. Andre Ward was absent, but Arthur Abraham, Jermain Taylor, Mikkel Kessler, Andre Dirrell, and Carl Froch posed together, giving the usual answers to the usual questions. The tenor was less like the usual fighter's press junket, and closer to actors hitting the talk show circuit to promote their new summer blockbuster. Dirrell, who didn't dress up for the event (is he a housepainter on the side?) said that his heart was beating "100 miles per minute, because I know I'm in a blessed position to become the greatest of all time."

PHOTO BY ALEXIS CUAREZMA/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Olympic gold medalist Andre Ward joined the press junket in Europe. Ward will face Kessler, THE RING's number-one super middleweight contender, in November, which will be a significant step up in class for the Oakland, California, fighter, who until now has been fighting journeymen.

International Showdowns Scheduled

The Showtime tournament begins October 18th with two bouts. First, WBC super middleweight titleholder Carl Froch, 25-0 (20), meets 2004 Olympic bronze medalist Andre Dirrell on Froch's home turf of Nottingham, England. Froch, 32, is known for holding his left low, and winging wild right hands over the top. He showed grit against Jermain Taylor last April, rising from a knockdown to win via 12th-round TKO. Dirrell, 18-0 (13), has looked good in recent bouts. At his best, the 26-year-old is a tall, difficult southpaw with natural athletic ability. At his worst, he's a running slapper. THE RING does not rate him.

Our Pick: Froch's aggression causes Dirrell to fight defensively. Can Dirrell win this way in Nottingham? No, Froch wins on points.

Former middleweight champion Taylor meets Arthur Abraham in the other tournament bout. Taylor, 28-3-1 (17), has been kayoed twice, and has a tendency to fade in late rounds. Still, realizing this tournament is his last chance, he may rise to the occasion. Abraham, 30-0 (24), relinquished the IBF middleweight belt to take part in the tournament, and will face Taylor in Germany, Abraham's home country. Abraham is a rugged, methodical fighter with a good left hook.

Our Pick: Taylor has height and reach advantages over Abraham, and uses them to win the early rounds. Abraham comes on at the finish, doing just enough to win, perhaps by split decision.

In November, WBA super middleweight titlist Mikkel Kessler, 41-1 (31), leaves Denmark to meet Andre Ward, possibly in Oakland. Kessler has been bothered by hand and back prob-

Dirrell is headed for England to take on Froch (opposite page)

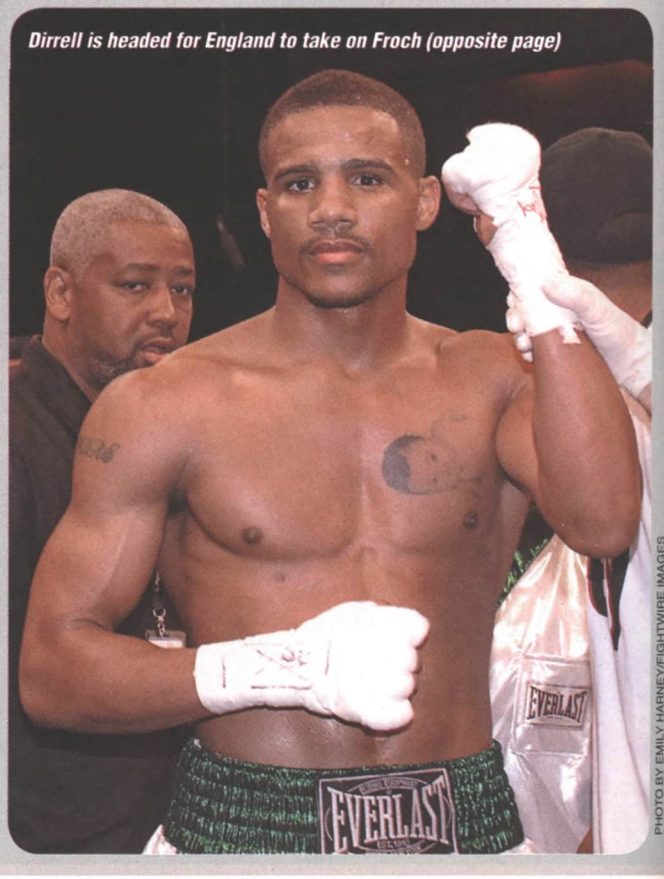


PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

The fighters repeated the routine in Copenhagen two days later. Then, with Ward joining, they were off to Berlin. By then, Dirrell was wearing his good pants and the series had created a genuine buzz.

People are enchanted by the word "tournament." After all, that's how other sports do it. In boxing, where clarity has gone the way of 15-round fights, a tournament creates the impression that order is being restored. But boxing isn't college basketball. A fighter can win a tournament, and there'll still be some debate as to whether he's the top guy. Our guess is that Showtime is less concerned with replacing ex-champion Joe Calzaghe, than in grabbing some ratings.

Hershman has been given kudos for pulling in so many different promoters, including Gary Shaw, Lou DiBella, Dan Goossen, the Sauerlands, and Mick Hennessy. Then again, promoters were probably eager to sign on since Showtime is the de facto promoter and is doing the bulk of the work.

"Six fighters of this caliber and five promoters of this level—awful lot of ego," DiBella told *The New York Times*. "Honestly, though, in some ways, I don't think it was as difficult as some people might believe because the promoters involved in this are pretty smart guys, and every one of their fighters is served tremendously by being participants."

Translation: My guy, Jermain Taylor, has lost three of his last four fights and I'm just happy he's got a gig. Still, what a story it would be if Taylor made a good showing.

Bernard Hopkins knows what winning a tournament can do for one's career. Hopkins used King's 2001 quickie middleweight tournament as his coming out party, stopping Felix Trinidad in the finale for the world championship. But most tournaments don't end with such a bang. Either a boring fighter wins and no one cares, or the obvious fighter wins and no one cares. In some cases, the culminating bout stinks. Historically, tournaments in professional boxing serve to kill time before something better happens.

Viewers were decidedly underwhelmed in 1986 when HBO rolled out its heavyweight title-unification series. They remained that way until a 20-year-old Mike Tyson entered the field like a rutting rhino. As expected, and to the relief of HBO, Tyson brought attention to the series, collecting the WBA, WBC, and IBF title belts in the process. By the time Tyson won the final with a workmanlike 12-round decision over Tony Tucker, the HBO series had become *The Mike Tyson Show*. When it was over, King presented Tyson with a jeweled scepter, chinchilla

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

lems, and has blamed his sub-par performance against Joe Calzaghe on injuries. Still, he's the most experienced fighter in the tourney, having beaten some of the top super middleweights in Europe and Australia. Ward, 19-0 (12), the 2004 Olympic gold medalist, showed some savvy in outpointing Edison Miranda earlier this year. Still, Kessler is a very big step up for him. Kessler and Ward each had fights scheduled for September, Kessler making a mandatory defense of his title against Gusmyl Perdomo, Ward against an opponent unnamed at press time.

Our Pick: Ward lacks the firepower, so Kessler presses forward and wins a close bout on points.

The 2010 tournament bouts may include Froch-Kessler, Abraham-Dirrell, Ward-Taylor, Froch-Abraham, Kessler-Taylor, and in a battle of 2004 Olympians, Ward-Dirrell.

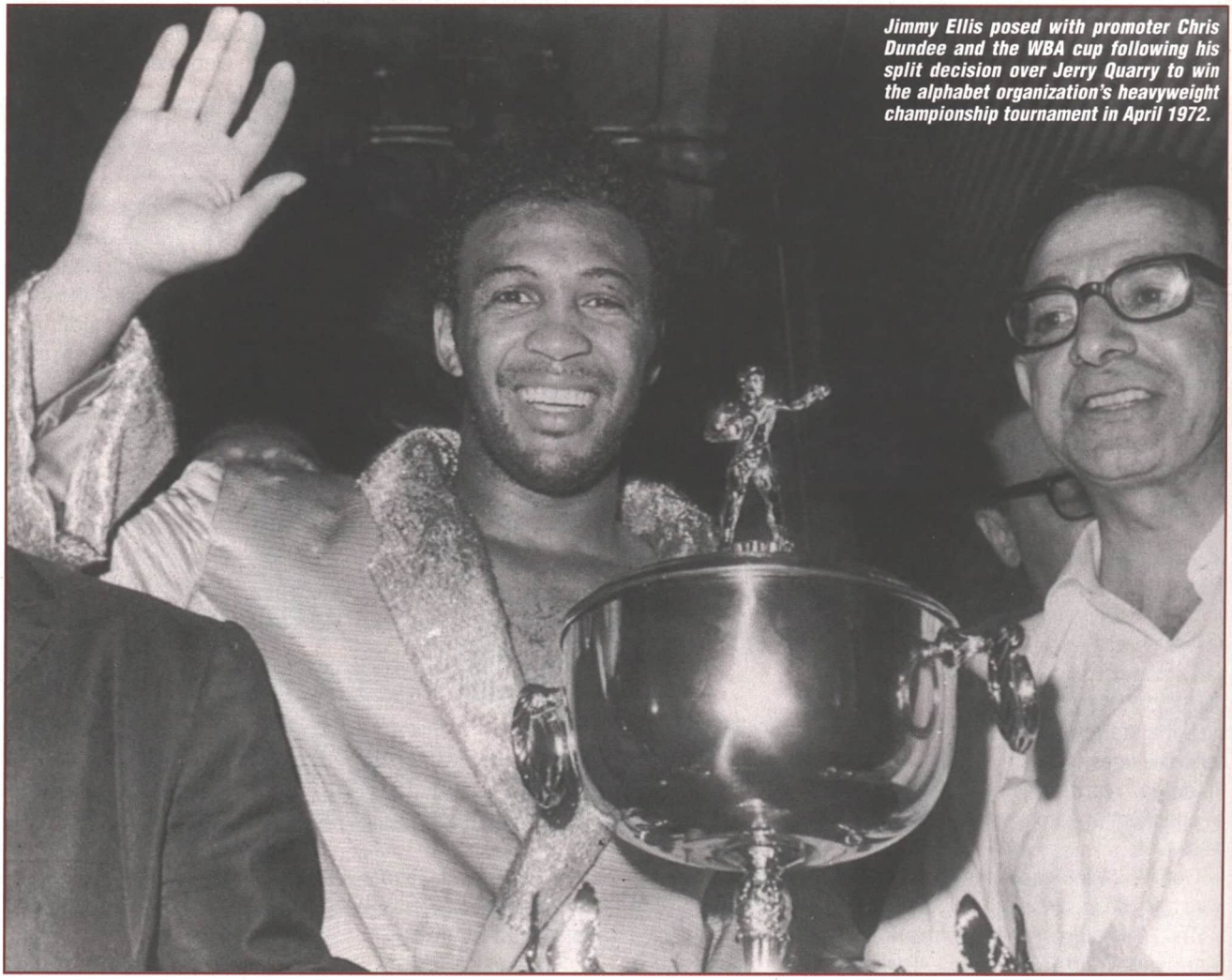
Who wins it all? The key to winning the tournament will be durability, for each fighter suddenly has three, four, or five very difficult fights ahead. While we're not picking Ward and Dirrell to win their opening bouts, they're young enough to withstand the hard fights, learn from their mistakes, and may still be standing at the end. But don't discount Abraham, who showed insane toughness when he battled through a broken jaw to outpoint Miranda. Also, Abraham has been known to enter the ring wearing a crown and cape. If "King Arthur" wins the whole shebang, he already has the wardrobe for the coronation.

—D.S.

Even though Mike Tyson won HBO's heavyweight tournament, he was not universally recognized as heavyweight champion until he beat THE RING *and lineal champ Michael Spinks via first-round knockout in June 1988 (pictured). Tyson held the undisputed title less than two years.*

robe, and a fuzzy red crown. Hard to believe, but the event wasn't enhanced by dressing Tyson as a character from *Alice in Wonderland*.

The HBO heavyweight series had problems, not the least of which was that it cost over $20-million and dragged on for 17 months (which felt like six years). Michael Spinks, who'd defeated Larry Holmes for the IBF title in '85 and was regarded as the linear champion, was stripped of his title for nixing a mandatory defense against Tucker. Spinks skipped the series for a big money bout with popular Gerry Cooney, which Spinks won. The HBO series inadvertently helped create a clamor for Spinks to face Tyson. The two eventually fought, with Spinks capsizing in 91 seconds. Ironically, the fighter who faced Tucker in the tournament and flopped (Buster Douglas) resurfaced three years later and kayoed Tyson in Japan.



Jimmy Ellis posed with promoter Chris Dundee and the WBA cup following his split decision over Jerry Quarry to win the alphabet organization's heavyweight championship tournament in April 1972.

Showtime's tourney lacks a Tyson (or a Trinidad, or even a Hopkins), but the playing field seems competitive, and it's bound to spawn some good fights. It's tempting to view the Showtime lineup as three Europeans versus three Americans. Of course, Showtime execs would never cop to it in public, but in a candid moment they might admit a preference for an American winner. After all, how much could a Danish or Armenian fighter be worth to Showtime subscribers?

Still, the lineup gives the tournament an international flair. In that regard, it reminds us a bit of the 1967-68 WBA tourney to crown a heavyweight champion in the wake of Muhammad Ali's exile. Argentina's Oscar Bonavena and Karl Mildenberger of Germany were chosen along with Americans Thad Spencer, Leotis Martin, Ernie Terrell, Jimmy Ellis, Jerry Quarry, and Floyd Patterson.

The WBA tournament was significant because, as *Sports Illustrated* said at the time, it represented "the final takeover by TV of a major sports field." ABC bankrolled the series for a company called Sports Action Inc., an organization that included such people as Bob Arum, and football star Jim Brown. Madison Square Garden refused to leave Saturday afternoons free to accommodate ABC's *Wide World of Sports*, which resulted in Garden favorite Joe Frazier being left out of the story. Most of the bouts took place at The Houston Astrodome—Sports Action Inc. had connections there too. The finale between Quarry and Ellis was a ratings bonanza, but the millions of viewers tuning in saw Ellis win a very dull majority decision.

Meanwhile, New York State (or as it was known in those days, Madison Square Garden) said phooey to the tourney, and recognized Frazier as champion after he beat Buster Mathis. Maine, Massachusetts, Illinois, and Pennsylvania followed suit. For good measure, Frazier destroyed Ellis in 1970. Garden matchmaker Teddy Brenner sneered that the elimination tournament had been "a complete success in that it successfully eliminated all the fighters." Most people still considered Ali the champion, anyway.

At one time, tournaments were commonplace in boxing, dating back to the 1900s when promoters searched for a great white hope to challenge black heavyweight champion Jack Johnson. This gimmick was still going on in 1941, when Detroit club owner Frank Barbaro proposed one of the most outrageous tournaments of all time.

Lee Savold won a tournament to find a white challenger for heavyweight champion Joe Louis by taking a 10-round decision over Jack Marshall in November 1941. Lee never got a title shot, but was stopped by an aging Louis when they finally fought 10 years later in a non-title bout.

Barbaro projected a 128-man heavyweight tournament to find a white challenger for champion Joe Louis, starting on opening night with 64 three-rounders. Barbaro's vision included using two rings, so he could stage bouts simultaneously. After the Michigan state commis-

sion vetoed 58 of the participants, Barbaro brought a scaled-down version of his dream to Detroit's Olympia Stadium. One writer called the tourney "high, pugilistic comedy," featuring "300-pounders with bouncing breasts." Barbaro remained unflappable. "My boys is good," he said, even as his money drained away and the customers jeered.

Part of Barbaro's mission was rooted in vindictiveness. He'd asked Louis' promoter, Mike Jacobs, for help with the tourney, but "Uncle Mike" told Barbaro the idea was nutty. Barbaro, one of those self-made men who despised authority, took Jacobs' slight as a challenge.

"I'll find a challenger for Louis before I die," Barbaro said. "That Jacobs got the fight game in a corner. I'm gonna get it out of that corner and make this town (Detroit) the center for boxing." Depression era journeyman Lee Savold emerged as the winner, but 10 years would pass before Savold met Louis. Joe stopped him in six.

New York, at one time the most powerful sanctioning body in boxing, held

Will The Ring Vacancy Be Filled?

The Ring super middleweight title has been vacant since Calzaghe relinquished it in September 2008

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Readers of The Ring may wonder how our championship policy fits into the Showtime "Super Six World Boxing Classic." Basically, with the championship vacant, our guiding principle remains the same: If The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders meet at any time during the tournament, we would surely recognize the winner as champion.

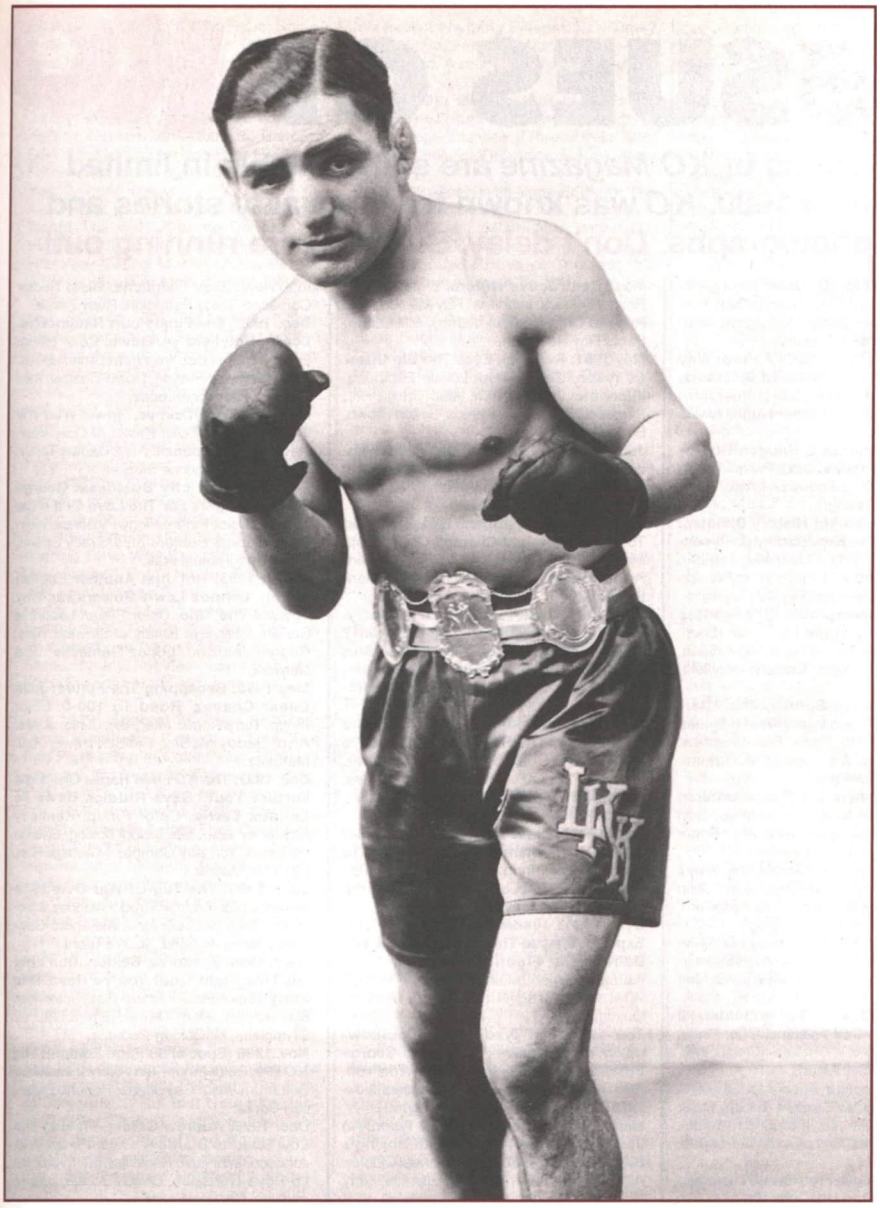
Here's the tricky part. Mikkel Kessler is currently our number-one rated super middleweight. But his first opponent, Andre Ward, is far down the list at number nine. So we'll be enjoying the bout, but not proclaiming the winner as The Ring champion. Since we have no way of knowing how our ratings will change as a result of the tournament outcomes, we can't even guess who will be the number-one and number-two contenders a year from now. To make things even trickier, our number-two super middleweight, Lucian Bute, is not in the tournament. If Bute keeps winning, he'll probably keep his number-two rating, meaning the Showtime fighters won't nudge him out of his spot.

Meanwhile, Showtime has its own numbers game. Here's how the tournament breaks down: A win by decision earns two points, while a win by knockout earns three points. A fight ending in a draw earns one point for each fighter.

The four fighters with the highest point totals move on to the semifinals. The fighter with the most points meets the semifinalist with the least points. The number-two and number-three point earners meet in the other semifinal.

Should there be a tie at the semifinal stage, there are ways to clear things up: 1) If the tie is between two fighters who have already faced each other, the winner of their bout advances. 2) If they haven't fought, the fighter with the most knockouts advances. 3) If they are still tied, they'll go to the scorecards and tally up each fighter's tournament bouts, with the fighter winning the most rounds advancing. 4) A good, old-fashioned coin toss.

—D.S.



Louis "Kid" Kaplan emerged the winner in the New York State Athletic Commission's tournament to find a new featherweight champion by stopping Danny Kramer. The tournament was marred, however, when Kramer's decision over Mike Dundee caused a riot at Madison Square Garden.

tournaments on an almost yearly basis during the 1920s and '30s. One of the most raucous came about when featherweight champion Johnny Dundee announced in 1924 that he could no longer make weight. Six featherweights—Louis "Kid" Kaplan, Danny Kramer, Jose Lombardo, Bobby Garcia, Mike Dundee, and Lew Paluso—were chosen to fight for his crown at the Garden. Promoter Tex Rickard jammed three bouts into one November night, one of which resulted in a full-scale riot.

The mayhem started when Kramer won a decision over Mike Dundee. Dick Curley, Dundee's manager, was so outraged by the scoring that he attacked one of the judges. When security went after Curley, he slipped passed them and took a poke at referee Patsy Haley. Curley's behavior incited the Garden crowd, until, as *The New York Times* reported, "bedlam reigned."

Kaplan went on to win the tourney, beating Kramer in January 1925. Still, many didn't give Kaplan full championship recognition until he defeated Babe Herman in 1926. Herman was a respected California featherweight who'd been the odd man out during the tourney—he'd fought Kaplan to draws twice in 1923—but most tourneys leave out someone, whether it was Herman in '24, Frazier in '68, Spinks in '87, or Lucian Bute in 2009.

There have been conflicting stories as to why IBF titlist Bute is not part of the Showtime series. At one point, it was reported that Bute's camp declined an offer from Showtime, but Hershman denied that Bute was ever invited. Hershman later flip flopped, saying Bute may actually appear in the tournament at some point. With this thing stretching out until 2011, anything can happen. Tournaments occasionally implode, the most glaring example being Don King's notorious U.S. championship tourney that aired on ABC in 1977. Even THE RING got slightly soiled in that one.

The goal was to crown a U.S. champion in eight weight classes. Fresh off his triumphs with Ali in Zaire and Manila, King was practically breathing fire to promote this spectacle, which would kick off in January 1977 aboard the USS Lexington, a naval aircraft carrier docked in Pensacola, Florida. THE RING's editor at the time, Nat Loubet, and associate editor John Ort, were also involved, supplying ratings, records, and a belt for the winners.

By March, amid allegations of fabricated records and kickbacks, the tournament was canceled. THE RING's reputation suffered, although no hard evidence of illegal activity was ever presented.

After a change in ownership in 1979, THE RING carried on. King carried on, too, and every so often he still threatens to create another tournament, for tournaments are where King can be his P.T. Barnum best.

Showtime's tournament carries with it a whiff of the old-time bombast. Still, fans and the media are buying into it. In fact, many believe the round-robin idea is the wave of the future. Froch recently told a U.K. radio station, "To win this tournament will make me an international superstar; it's as simple as that."

Where tournaments are concerned, nothing is simple. But for those remaining sweetly optimistic, here's hoping the hoopla pays off. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

BACK ISSUES OF KO

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Nov. 1985: McGuigan! The Pluck Of The Irish. Also: Julio Cesar Chavez, Thomas-Weaver, Donald Curry, featherweights.

Dec. 1985: Pinklon Thomas: "Larry Holmes Betrayed Boxing." Color Pinup: Hagler-Mugabi. Also: Mike McCallum, Tyrell Biggs, Camacho-Ramirez.

Feb. 1986: King Michael: How Long Will He Rule The Heavyweights? Also: Barry McGuigan, Shawn O'Sullivan, Spinks-Holmes, *Rocky IV*, world's best fighter poll.

Oct. 1986: They're Back!!! The Cooney Circus Returns. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Jimmy Paul, Mike Tyson, Donald Curry.

Dec. 1986: Larry Holmes' Message To Mike Tyson: "Show Me You Can Kick My Butt!" Color pinup: Mark Breland. Interview: Holmes. Also: Witherspoon-Bruno, Evander Holyfield, Cruz-McGuigan, Danny Lopez.

Feb. 1987: Upset Of The Decade: Has Honeyghan Cut Short The Curry Era? Color Pinup: Marvin Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Edwin Rosario, Hector Camacho.

June 1987: New WBA Welterweight Champion Mark Breland: He's Got A Lot To Smile About. Interview: Marvin Hagler. Color Pinup: Greg Haugen. Also: Michael Olajide, Carlos Monzon.

Nov. 1987: Michael Spinks: The War With Tyson Is Okay With Him. Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: Frankie Duarte. Also: Matthew Hilton, Hagler-Czyz.

Dec. 1987: Mike Tyson: Undisputed Heavyweight King—But Is He Losing His Loyal Subjects? Color Pinup: Matthew Hilton. Interview: Barry McGuigan. Also: Aaron Pryor, Mike McCallum.

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Feb. 1988: Pazienza & Haugen Go For Each Other's Throats. Color Pinup: Marlon Starling. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Tate-Olajide, ESPN Boxing.

July 1988: Superfight History Dictates: Don't Expect The Expected From Tyson-Spinks. Color Pinup: Roger Mayweather. Interview: Dr. Ferdie Pacheco. Also: Roberto Duran, Azumah Nelson, Barkley-Olajide.

Aug. 1988: Tyson-Spinks: *KO's* Fearless Forecast Of Superfight '88. Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Matthew Hilton. Also: Lockridge-Knight, Evander Holyfield, Lloyd Honeyghan.

Sept. 1988: Tyson-Spinks, The Aftermath—What If Tyson Wins; What If Spinks Wins? Color Pinup: Frank Tate. Interview: Marlon Starling. Also: Barry McGuigan, Simon Brown, risk-taking.

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Sept. 1989: "I Beat Up Tyson Before, I'll Do It Again," by Carl Williams. Color Pinup: Michael Nunn. Also: Chavez-Mayweather, Brian Mitchell, Marv Albert.

Feb. 1990: George Foreman Risks A Multimillion-Dollar Shot At Tyson. Color Pinup: Brian Mitchell. Interview: Riddick Bowe. Also: Simon Brown, Molina-Lopez, East vs. West.

June 1990: A Sugar-Free Future? Thomas Hearns Is Looking Up. Color Pinup: Glenn McCrory. Interview: Michael Moorer. Also: Matthew Hilton, Molina-Suarez, Foreman-Cooney, Camacho-Paz.

July 1990: *KO* Interview—Sugar Ray Leonard. Color Pinup: Jorge Paez. Also: Michael Nunn, Buster Douglas, Jibaro Perez, the Olympians.

Aug. 1990: Meldrick Taylor: Brilliance In Defeat. Color Pinup: Buster Douglas. Interview: Teddy Atlas. Also: Buddy McGirt, Dokes-Ruddock, Simon Brown.

Sept. 1990: *KO* Interview—Buster Douglas. Color Pinup: Macho Camacho. Also: Thomas Hearns, Nigel Benn, Greg Haugen, Boxing Hall of Fame.

Oct. 1990: Send In The Clown: Is Jorge Paez A Phenom Or A Fraud? Color Pinup: Paul Banke. Interview: Tony Lopez. Also: Chavez-Taylor II, Jesse Benavides.

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Feb. 1991: 10 Fighters To Fear: Boxing's Most Destructive Hitters. Color Pinup: Razor Ruddock. Interview: Ray Mercer. Also: Roberto Duran, Saoul Mamby, Mills Lane, Sugar Ray Robinson.

May 1991: Ruddock Eyes The Big Upset Of Tyson. Color Pinup: Luisito Espinosa. Interview: Jeff Fenech. Also: Virgil Hill, Pernell Whitaker, Alex Ramos, Simon Brown, Buddy McGirt.

June 1991: Exclusive *KO* Interview: Evander Holyfield. Color Pinup: Raul Perez. Also: Norris-Leonard, Charles Williams, champs of 1971 vs. 1991, J.C. Chavez.

July 1991: Riddick Bowe: Is He Destined To Be Heavyweight Champ? Color Pinup: Michael Carbajal. Interview: Buddy McGirt. Also: Bobby Czyz, Buster Douglas, Mark Breland.

Aug. 1991: Desert Storm II: Will The Tyson-Ruddock Rematch Be Different? Color Pinup: Loreto Garza. Interview: Michael Carbajal. Also: Brown-Blocker, Fenech-Nelson preview, Harold Brazier, Yuh-Carbajal.

Sept. 1991: Remember Me? I Won The Fight! What "The Real Deal" Still Has To Deal With. Color Pinup: Ray Mercer. Interview: Eddie Futch. Also: Larry Holmes, southpaw heavyweights, Toney-Nunn, Brown-Taylor.

Oct. 1991: Thomas Hearns Works Another Miracle! Now There Are More Hills Left To Climb. Color Pinup: Humberto Gonzalez. Interview: Mike McCallum. Also: Norris-Curry, Richard Steele, Troy Dorsey.

Dec. 1991: Tyson vs. Holyfield—The Experts Analyze The Elements That Will Decide The Fight. Color Pinup: Joey Gamache. Also: Michael Moorer, Pernell Whitaker, Greg Richardson, Robert Quiroga.

Jan. 1992: The Tyson-Holyfield Showdown: An Exclusive Forecast By George Foreman. Color Pinup: Myung Woo Yuh. Also: Fenech-Nelson, TV announcers, boxing's toughest men, Toney-McCallum.

March 1992: *KO* Interview Mike Tyson: An In-Depth, Toe-To-Toe Talk With Boxing's Biggest Star. Color Pinup: Michael Moorer. Also: Thomas Hearns, Tracy Patterson, Larry Holmes, best fighter poll.

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July 1992: The Title Reign of Evander Holyfield: A Reason To Hide ... Or A Reason For Pride? Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Julian Jackson. Also: Kelley-Dorsey, Nelson-Fenech, Kennedy McKinney.

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June 1995: The Tug-Of-War Over Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Wilfredo Vasquez. Interview: Oliver McCall. Also: Alejandro Gonzalez, Alexis Arguello, Kostya Tszyu.

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Nov. 1996 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Roy Jones, Roberto Duran, Joe Cortez.

Dec. 1996: Andrew Golota—Taking The Low Road to Stardom. Color Pinup: Mark Johnson. Interview: Rock Newman. Also: De La Hoya-Gonzalez, Chuck Bodak, bizarre endings, Chavez-Rosario.

Jan. 1997 (Special 88-Page Edition): Bowe-Golota II: Hatred And Vengeance ... It's A Beautiful Thing! Color Pinup: Johnny Tapia. Interview: Lou Duva. Also: Mouse Strauss, heavyweight rematches, Azumah Nelson.

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Aug. 1997: Oscar Reaches ... But Can't Grasp The Stars. Color Pinup: Nate Miller. Interview: Hector Camacho. Also: Norris-Trinidad preview, Hall of Fame, Angel Manfredy.

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Holiday 1997 (Special 88-Page Edition): Holyfield-Moorer II: Can Evander Avenge His Ugliest Defeat? Color Pinup: Vince Phillips. Interview: Mills Lane. Also: Roy Jones, Baby Jake Matlala, Boxing 2000.

Jan. 1998: De La Hoya Humbles The Macho Man: "Oscar's The Best I've Ever Fought." Color Pinup: William Guthrie. Interview: Mark Johnson. Also: Johnny Tapia, Pinklon Thomas, defense.

March 1998: Evander Holyfield: For The Real Deal, Lewis Is No Big Deal. Color Pinup: Lou Del Valle. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Also: David Izon, Meldrick Taylor, rapid weight loss.

May 1998: Living Up To The Hype: Sometimes They Do ... Sometimes They Don't. Color Pinup: David Reid. Interview: Best Of ... (Part III). Also: Naseem Hamed, Marty Denkin, women's boxing.

June 1998: Lewis vs. Holyfield: Why The Fight Of The Year Isn't Going To Happen. Color Pinup: Evander Holyfield. Interview: Eddie Futch. Also: Hector Lizarraga, pain, Head-To-Head review.

Aug. 1998: Lewis Bombs Out Briggs: Would The WBC Champ Do This To Holyfield? Color Pinup: Keith Mullings. Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Pernell Whitaker, Marco Antonio Barrera, Roberto Garcia.

Sept. 1998: Can Mike Tyson Make A Successful Comeback? Sugar Ray Leonard Has The Answer. Color Pinup: Michael Grant. Interview: Brad Jacobs. Also: Naseem Hamed, Wayne McCullough, Kirk Johnson.

Oct. 1998: The Ultimate Fantasy Card. Color Pinup: Oscar De La Hoya. Interview: Roy Jones. Also: Brendan Ingle, NYPD boxing, prospect blueprint.

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Oct. 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Felix Trinidad. Interview: Jake LaMotta. Also: Tony Ayala, Erik Morales, Junior Jones.

Nov. 1999: De La Hoya vs. Trinidad: "It's Gonna Come Down To Who The Hell Wants It Most!" Color Pinup: David Reid. Interview: Arturo Gatti. Also: Roy Jones, Sugar Shane Mosley, Vassily Jirov.

Dec. 1999: David Reid & Fernando Vargas: Olympic Teammates On A Collision Course! Color Pinup: Zab Judah. Interview: Ike Ibeabuchi. Also: Vitali Klitschko, Antonio Tarver, Mike Tyson.

Holiday 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): Lewis-Holyfield II: Why We Demand A Knockout! Color Pinup: Sharmba Mitchell. Interview: Paulie Ayala. Also: James Toney, James Page & Terronn Millett, decade review.

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Feb. 2000: Breakout 2000: Who's Going To Lead The Way In Y2K? Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Shane Mosley, Wise-Chavez, Iran Barkley.

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May 2000: Michael Grant vs. Lennox Lewis—25 Insiders Pick The Winner. Color Pinup: Paul Spadafora. Interview: Dan Goossen. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Johnny Tapia, southpaws.

June 2000: Lewis vs. Grant: Who Will Win ... And Why. Color Pinup: Vitali Klitschko. Interview: Sharmba Mitchell. Also: Shane Mosley, David Izon, 2000 Hall of Fame.

July 2000: Today's Fighters, Tomorrow's Hall Of Famers. Color Pinup: Keith Holmes. Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Zab Judah, Morales-Barrera, Wayne Braithwaite.

Aug. 2000: Mosley Prepares For Oscar: "It Will Be Like The First Round Of Hagler-Hearns." Color Pinup: Steve Johnston. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Vargas-Quartey, Thomas Hearns, Felix Trinidad, common sense vs. cowardice.

Sept. 2000: Now Vargas Is Ready For Trinidad & De La Hoya. Color Pinup: Erik Morales. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Trinidad vs. all-time greats, Thomas Hearns, common sense vs. cowardice.

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Feb. 2001: Fernando Vargas' Internal Battle: If He Can't Win It, He Can't Beat Trinidad. Interview: Evander Holyfield. Also: Derrick Gainer, Roy Jones, Naseem Hamed.

April 2001: Lewis Is Too Much For Tua ... But Could Tyson Do Any Better? Interview: Max Kellerman. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Wladimir Klitschko.

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Aug. 2001: Sugar Shane Mosley: Too Sweet For The Bad Boy Era? Interview: Richard Steele. Also: Evander Holyfield, Roy Jones, Jesus Chavez.

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Feb. 2002: Bernard Hopkins: "I Am The American Dream. I Am The American Story." Interview: Wladimir Klitschko. Also: Omar Sheika, Vernon Forrest, Juan Lazcano.

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Feb. 2005: Exclusive KO Interview—Manny Pacquiao. Also: Kostya Tszyu, Manning Galloway, quitting, perfect heavyweight.

Oct. 2005: El Feroz With A Twist: Re-tooled Vargas Gets Defensive. Interview: Zab Judah. Also: Marco Antonio Barrera, Jean-Marc Mormeck, Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., *KO* at 25.

Feb. 2006: Can Hip Hop Revitalize Boxing? Interview: Erik Morales. Also: Zab Judah, Ricardo Mayorga, Arturo Gatti, Luis Collazo, Roman Karmazin.

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Dedication, Focus, Results

THE RESURGENCE OF EDDIE CHAMBERS

By William Dettloff

You couldn't blame Eddie Chambers if he said to hell with it and walked away already. Why bother? You know by now all the reasons he never could be heavyweight champion of the world, or even one of the seven or eight heavyweights running around with a title belt from the WBA. You can recite the list as well as we can. You've heard it enough times. So has he.

Chambers is too small. He can't punch. He's not dedicated enough. He's lazy. He's too nice. He's chubby. He's a poor man's Chris Byrd. He's not even Eastern European. He was born under the wrong astrological sign. His nickname, "Fast Eddie," is insufficiently menacing (and unoriginal). He's not on probation. Freddie Roach isn't his trainer. Finally, and maybe most important, no tattoos!

Consider: Wladimir Klitschko, finally the world champion and the man to whose haughty position Chambers aspires, is a living Adonis, a 6'6½" walking, breathing monument to modern

Referee Genaro Rodriguez raises Chambers' arms in victory following the American's 12-round majority decision over Dimitrenko. When judge Paul Thomas' outlandish 113-113 score was announced, even the pro-Dimitrenko crowd in Hamburg, Germany, booed.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Chambers' win was big news back home in Philly, where his victory was featured on the front page of the* Philadelphia Daily News*, a very rare occurrence in an era when most U.S. newspapers ignore boxing, even within the sports pages.

masculine perfection, with handsome European features, perfect orthodontia, and, when he feels like it, a right hand that could knock down buildings.

It is pure fantasy to think Chambers, a relatively stubby 6'1" and thick in the middle even when slimmed down, could hope to compete with such a force. Or, for that matter, with Wlad's older brother, Vitali, who, though less pleasing aesthetically, is just as big, tough like a horseshoe crab, and confoundedly effective.

Today, in 2009, guys like Chambers, who live in little American towns like Voorhees in dirty little states like New Jersey in once omnipotent countries like the United States, do not beat big, powerful, Eastern European behemoths. It just doesn't happen. Except when it does.

On July 4, of all dates, Chambers fought in Hamburg, Germany, and disassembled 6'7", 253-pound, top-10 rated and heretofore undefeated Alexander Dimitrenko, winning a decision that was of the "majority" kind only in name; an incredulous German crowd hissed and booed raucously when the cockamamie score of Paul Thomas was announced as 113-113. The other judges, Glenn Feldman and Fernando Laguna, watched the fight with their eyes open, and scored it accordingly, 117-109 and 116-111, respectively.

Chambers, 35-1 (18), out-jabbed Dimitrenko, 29-1 (19), counterpunched the bejesus out of him, forced a standing eight-count with a bodyshot in the seventh, and dropped him in the 10th round with a whistling left hook. It was the type of inspired, zealous performance many had begun to believe Chambers was incapable of delivering against an opponent not found near the bottom of the division's top 20 or so practitioners. Importantly, it stood in sharp contrast to Chambers' uninspired showings against Alexander Povetkin and, to a lesser degree, Sam Peter. According to Chambers, it was no fluke.

"It wasn't a situation where I could go in there and lose and feel okay about it," Chambers told THE RING a couple weeks after the win. "It was like a crossroads fight for me. But the focus was there, the sense of urgency was there, all the things we needed in the past: The great camp I had, the great team that I had, and the great challenge it was to go over there on German soil and fight one of the best heavyweights in the world.

"I put together the aggressiveness and the focus. Plus I got my weight down to a manageable weight. Everyone could see that I was in good shape, but not only was I in good shape, I was definitely on-point that night in every fashion."

Much like his fellow prospect Christobal Arreola, Chambers' weight is a topic of frequent discussion and one of the favorite targets of those who dismiss him. Even so, his skills are undeniable.

"From Day One, the first moment I ever saw him on one of our undercards, it's always been a matter of being dedicated, of being in shape and conditioned, because he's always had the look," said Joe Tessitore, who has called several of Chambers' fights on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* series.

"Truthfully, his frame and his body type is that of a cruiserweight. He's always been heavy and carrying too much weight. But Eddie Chambers is extremely skilled. He knows how to box and how to box well. He has very fast hand speed.

"I think he should just totally commit to getting down as low as he can get and getting in as good a shape as he can get, because he got in a little better shape for Dimitrenko and it really paid off."

Getting the weight down clearly made Chambers quicker and more active than we'd seen in the past. He credited a new diet and strength-training regimen, and assures that his new body is his permanent one. His trainer and manager, Rob Murray Sr., told THE RING how Chambers came to weigh in for Dimitrenko at 208¼ pounds after facing Peter at a fairly unsightly 223.

"After the Sam Peter fight, I told him, 'I don't like 223 on you.' He said: 'Neither do I.' I said, 'What weight do you think? He said, 'What weight do you think? I said 211. He said 208. So we came in between there. He put in the time and the work to make it happen."

Murray, a long-time Philadelphia-based boxing guy who counts Yank Durham, Willie Reddish, and Sam Solomon among his mentors, first saw Chambers in 2002 in Pittsburgh. Chambers, 19 years old at the time, was facing a heavyweight named David Chappell, who, unlike the comedian with a similar name, was not in the business of making people laugh.

"Chappell looked like Sonny Liston, and I saw Eddie and thought, *This kid's gonna get destroyed by this big guy*," Murray said. "Chappell had just got out of prison; he fit the whole Liston mold. He was whacking at Eddie like crazy, and I saw Chambers put a move on him, a little sidestep move, and he wound up behind Chappell, and Chappell put his gloves up over his face because he didn't know where Eddie was. I had never seen anything like that."

Murray began managing Chambers and, after Chambers' loss to Povetkin in Berlin in 2008, took over as head trainer. Buddy McGirt worked Chambers' corner against Povetkin, but until that time the

Jab, jab, and jab again. The lead left was among the keys to victory for Chambers, proving yet again that timing can overcome an opponent's advantage in height and reach. "Fast Eddie" also benefited from better conditioning and an aggressive attitude.

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Chambers cracks Alexander Povetkin with a left hook during their January 2008 bout in Berlin. Chambers got off to a promising start but lost focus the second half of the fight, went into a defensive shell, and lost the decision. It is Chambers' only loss to date, but he has successfully bounced back.

fighter had been trained his entire career by his father, Eddie Sr., who had fought in the 1970s. The elder Chambers started exposing his son to boxing from the time he was nine years old, and by the time little Eddie reached 12, he was hooked. It was also around that time that circumstances conspired to instill in him some of the demons all fighters must possess to excel.

"Dad owned a few bars and had a decent amount of money when we were little," Chambers said. "Then he lost the businesses and everything changed. We had to move, and for a long time we had nothing. We didn't have heat or hot water. We'd put water on the stove to heat it up and take baths.

"Finally, Dad got some government funding. And then got our paper route. We were out there at three in the morning every day delivering papers. It paid a little less than $1,000 a month. We'd go

PHOTO BY KRAFFT ANGERER/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Unlike in some previous bouts, Chambers wasn't reluctant to let his hands go in the Dimitrenko fight. When he eased up in the eighth round, manager/trainer Rob Murray woke him up with a tongue lashing between rounds.

PHOTO BY KRAFFT ANGERER/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Knowing his career as a top heavyweight was at stake, Chambers poured it on down the stretch, dropping Dimitrenko in the 10th round and rocking his foe again in the last round. Those who know him best believe that the Philadelphia-area fighter is reaching his potential.

food shopping with that. That's how bad it was at one point. That's what we were living off of. Basically, we all lived on about $1,000 a month."

When you talk to Chambers about things other than his childhood, it's easy to see why some people think he's too nice to be a fighter, why he could never stand up to the killers from other parts of the world that, presumably, spawn hungrier, tougher men. He's too polite, too genuine, too humble. Murray calls him honorable. And he appears to be that. But keep listening.

"Living that kind of life makes you never want to go back to it again," he said. "Living in one of the worst-looking houses that you could ever imagine seeing and knowing you got to go to school knowing that your friends know. You have to go to school and hear about it.

"I want to be somewhere and be the best in the world. I want to be remembered and I want to have something when I'm done with this. And I plan not to have to deliver any papers or live that hard life or do any those things I had to do when I was growing up."

Murray said people shouldn't be fooled by Chambers' appearance or manners.

"Eddie is the guy that you see coming down the street and he looks soft, but you slap him in the mouth, and you wind up calling 911 to get him off your ass. He is a guy that looks like Mother Theresa, but in his heart he's John Gotti. He's a real tough, tough kid because he came up tough. He came up very poor."

But talk, as we all know, is cheap. In the most important fight of his career Chambers sprinted to an early lead against Povetkin and then spent

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PHOTO BY CHRISTOF KOEPSEL/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

A pair of gigantic roadblocks: World heavyweight champion Wladimir Klitschko and his brother, Vitali, the WBC titleholder, sit atop the division and would present much tougher obstacles than Dimitrenko. Nonetheless, Chambers is confident he has what it takes to beat them.

the latter half of the fight covering up and getting hammered. He says now that he wasn't focused enough, and that distractions in his personal life and delays getting into camp forced him to cram what should have been six to eight weeks of training into 17 days. It was too much.

"You couldn't ask for a better start than I had in that fight, but what goes up must come down. But as a professional athlete, no matter what happens you have to be motivated and mentally focused, and whatever the situation is, just deal with it and bite the bullet and go in there and take your guy apart. I started that way; I just didn't finish it," he said.

In his next TV fight, against Peter, Chambers dominated but was criticized by many for not standing his ground more and throwing more punches.

Tessitore, who called the fight along with Teddy Atlas, told THE RING, "I think there were a lot of moments where Chambers disengaged from the fight, and the only reason he didn't pay the price was Sam Peter was worse. Eddie clearly won the fight and clearly controlled the fight, but what I saw that night was a fighter who couldn't fight every minute of every round, which is understandable—it's a hard thing to do. But if he could have, he would have looked spectacular."

Murray said there was a moment late in the Dimitrenko fight when Chambers again seemed to lose focus. He took drastic measures in the corner.

"After about the eighth round, he came back to the corner and had a dumb look on his face. I asked him a question and he didn't respond, so I slapped him and said, 'Wake up!' Then I asked him, 'When are you going to stop allowing people to bully you? The people in boxing are bullying you. Everyone says you're too small. You can't punch. You're underweight. You're boring. Everyone is dumping on you. They're bullying you. So you can't knock on the door anymore. You have to kick the door down. You can't walk through these fights like you're picking daisies. You're in Germany. You're in a fight!' And he woke right up."

No matter his condition or work rate, the biggest knock against Chambers will be his modest size in this time of monstrous heavyweights. The Brothers Klitschko, in particular, are giants but of a much different breed than Dimitrenko. Dimitrenko allowed Chambers to back him up; he pawed with his jab and seemed to have not a clue as to how to use his considerable height advantage. He displayed all the mobility of a Brontosaurus.

The Klitschkos represent an entirely different proposition. They use their height expertly. Wladimir has a bazooka of a jab, as does Vitali. Chambers won't back up either of them, and they've both taken shots from much harder hitters than Fast Eddie.

Still, Chambers talks the talk of all smaller heavyweights.

"We watched tapes of Joe Louis beating Max Baer and Abe Simon, watched how he put on constant pressure and kept his hands free on the inside. Evander Holyfield when he won the title was 208 pounds. Mike Tyson at his best was 210, 214. Muhammad Ali was 211 in his prime. These guys were not big guys and they were able to contend and be successful against big guys. It worked back then and it should work now, and I proved it by beating Dimitrenko.

"I just have to get the big time guy out of there," he said, referring to Wladimir. "Then people will have no choice but to believe in me."

With everything that's going against him, it might take even more than that. ■

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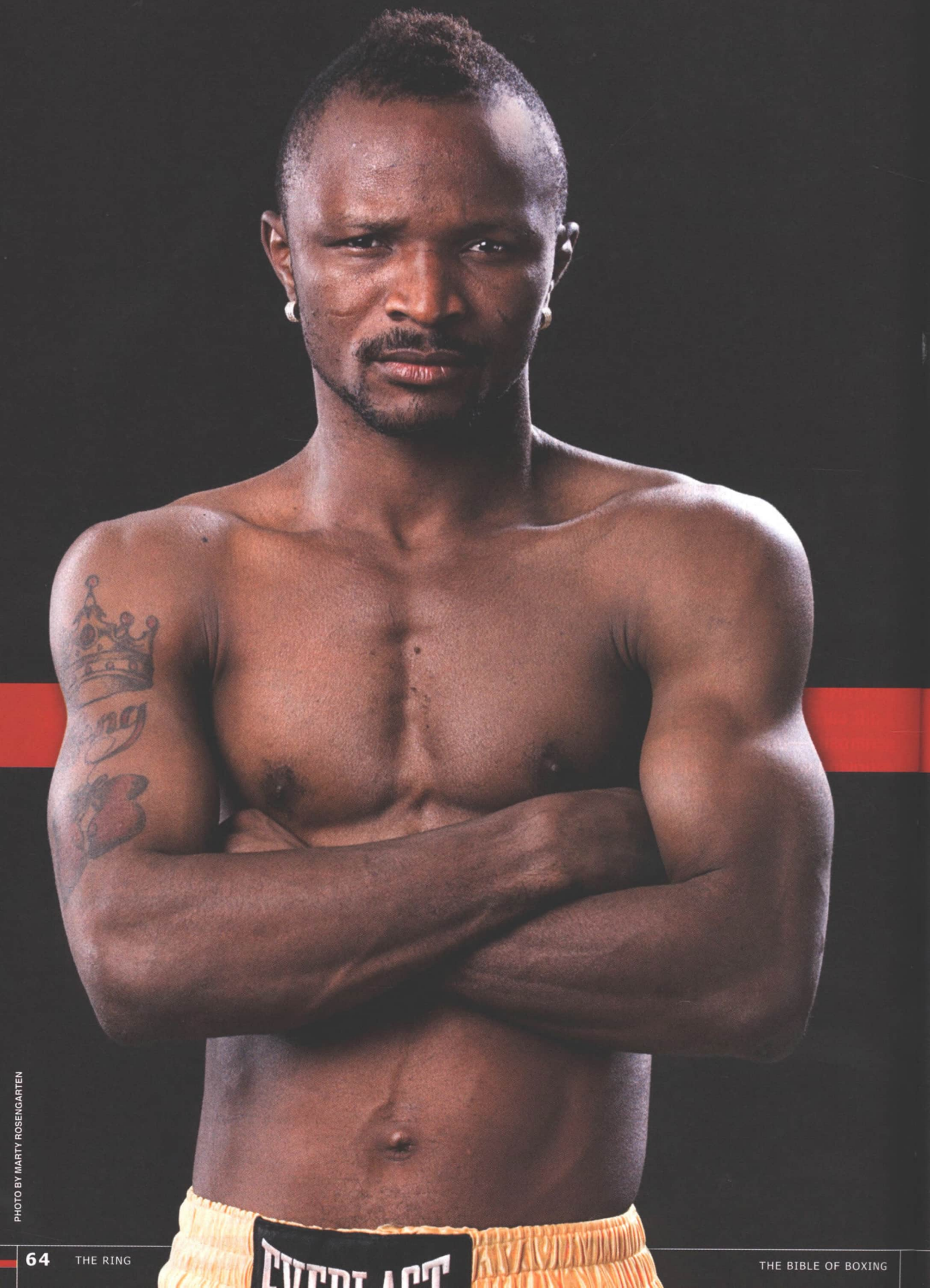

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

KING KONG OF THE 118-POUNDERS

Agbeko Beats His Chest For A World Title Bout

By Don Stewart

Joseph Agbeko isn't sure why his father chose to give him "King Kong" for a middle name. The moniker has been so central to his identity for so long, Agbeko has never thought to ask.

Maybe it had something to do with why Agbeko's older brother got the middle name "Samson." Maybe his father just has a wicked sense of humor. Whatever the case, like the guy in the Johnny Cash song, "A Boy Named Sue," Agbeko found that his name led to plenty of fights.

Agbeko wasn't the biggest kid in the schoolyard, and his disarmingly sweet voice isn't very Kong-like. Yet the New York-based Ghanaian claims to be undefeated, at least outside the ring.

"I won all of my school fights," said Agbeko in his heavily accented English. "I beat them because they didn't have the confidence to fight. God has always given me that confidence."

That confidence has carried the 29-year-old from the schoolyards of Accra, Ghana, to the United States, where he has emerged as one of the world's top 118-pounders and a potential star following his July 11 upset of Vic Darchinyan.

Agbeko, 27-1 (22), claims it was just confidence that led him to match the trash-talking Darchinyan in verbal fisticuffs heading into their July 11 showdown for Agbeko's bantamweight belt. Though Darchinyan was just as relentless—at one point he said King Kong would have to change his name to "Chimpanzee" after the fight—Agbeko's taunts clearly wore on him.

The two had to be separated by Darchinyan's promoter, Gary Shaw, at the prefight press conference after Agbeko repeatedly tried to pose with a fist held to Darchinyan's jaw. On the night of the bout, Darchinyan told Showtime's Jim Gray, through a sneer, that he hated Agbeko.

That hate seemed to corrode the patience of Darchinyan, 32-2-1 (26), who immediately strayed from the fight plan and went for the knockout from the opening bell. Against the slick Agbeko, that one-punch-at-a-time strategy proved to be ineffective. Moving and countering, Agbeko built a sizeable points lead in the early rounds on his way to the most significant victory of his career.

"I don't really know if it affected him," Agbeko said of his trash talk. "He himself knew that he was going to lose, even before we went into the ring. He was coming to fight a boxer and he wasn't going to be able to control the ring."

One of the major keys to Agbeko's victory against Darchinyan was his ability to land the right hand again and again. The lead right is often the most effective punch against southpaws, and Agbeko used it to great advantage.

PHOTOS BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

The first two rounds proved intense, as Darchinyan, making his 118-pound debut, used his aggressiveness to push Agbeko back. But Darchinyan was cut over his left eye early in the second, and he slowed down in the third when long-armed, boxer-puncher Agbeko began stepping back and catching "The Raging Bull" with straight rights as he lunged forward.

Neglecting to jab his way inside, Darchinyan continued to absorb rights to the face from Agbeko, who began mixing in his left hook while also targeting the body. If that hook had been a bit sharper, Agbeko might have fulfilled his promise to stop Darchinyan.

"I believe my left hook wasn't that good," Agbeko said. "I'm really going to work on the left hook. I have things that I'm going to work on, because no one is perfect. You always have to keep working to make yourself better at all times."

Florida boxing officials seemed to be working against him in the seventh round, when referee Tommy Kimmons awarded Darchinyan a questionable knockdown after the Australia-based Armenian appeared to shove Agbeko to the floor. The knockdown came near the end of a round that inexplicably lasted four minutes.

The alleged knockdown didn't faze Agbeko, who continued to drive right hands into Darchinyan's mug the rest of the way. He took Darchinyan's best shots, though they were often thrown from bad angles due to Agbeko's effective lateral movement. A frustrated Darchinyan resorted to throwing elbows and low blows, and he tossed Agbeko to the canvas in the 10th and 11th rounds.

Agbeko got the unanimous nod by scores of 114-113 (twice) and 116-111.

"I took a different tactic into the ring tonight," said Darchinyan, who, by the final bell, was cut over both eyes. "I went for the big punch and I lost, and I can't say anything about that. I was repeating the same mistakes and I was getting upset."

Agbeko's win was a national event in Ghana, which treated King Kong like royalty upon his return on July 21. A sizeable crowd of fans and dignitaries were waiting at Kotoka International Airport when his plane arrived. Among those in attendance were former world champ Azumah Nelson and former President Jerry John Rawlings.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

"I want to fight everybody. I want the world to know that I'm the best bantamweight in the world. Hasegawa, Sidorenko, Moreno, I want to fight them. If they come to fight me, I'll take their titles one by one and I'll have the titles to myself."

Despite the adoration and his own overflow of confidence, Agbeko has managed to keep himself grounded. He's known to give money to the homeless on the streets, and he says he's no better or worse than those people or anyone else back in Ghana. "We're all the same," Agbeko said.

"He's definitely a down-to-earth kind of guy," said Agbeko's manager, Vinny Scolpino.

In late-July, Scolpino said his fighter was likely headed toward a man-

datory defense in the fall against Yonnhy Perez, 19-0 (14). It would be a significant matchup in the division, given that Agbeko is rated fourth and Perez fifth by THE RING.

As for future opponents, Agbeko is quick to mention fellow beltholders Fernando Montiel, Hozumi Hasegawa, and Anselmo Moreno, along with third-ranked Wladimir Sidorenko. He asks what he has to do to win THE RING title, and voices his frustration that the top-rated Hasegawa won't fight outside of Japan (though maybe a fight there could be sold as King Kong vs. Godzilla).

"I want to fight everybody," said Agbeko, who is promoted by Don King. "I want the world to know that I'm the best bantamweight in the world. Hasegawa, Sidorenko, Moreno, I want to fight them. If they come to fight me, I'll take their titles one by one and I'll have the titles to myself and they won't get them until I retire."

Much of Agbeko's confidence comes from the belief that a Higher Power has marked him for greatness. Beating Darchinyan, he feels, was just a piece of his own manifest destiny.

Because being dubbed King Kong led to so many punch-ups during his childhood, Agbeko feels his name got him into the fight game. When Agbeko was just eight years old, he decided brawling was the only skill he really had, so he decided to take up boxing.

"From that first day," he said, "I decided I would become a world champion."

The son of a furniture maker (father) and a bean trader (mother), Agbeko was encouraged by his parents to focus on his studies rather than fighting. But he often found his mind wandering to the gym while in class, which led to less-than-stellar scores on his exams.

"My mom and dad didn't want me to fight because they wanted me to concentrate on school," Agbeko said. "Sometimes I had to run away from the house so I could go train somewhere and be able to box. I fought them so I could have the chance to train."

Agbeko was a reported 56-4 as an amateur, with a bronze at the All-Africa Championships and a trip to the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Malaysia. He turned pro in December 1998 in his native country, and within two years was 12-0 with 10 kayos and a regional bantamweight belt.

"To become a world champion in Africa, it's very difficult," said Agbeko. "We don't have good promoters in Africa, good managers. It's very hard to get to the top."

In May 2004, Agbeko took a fight with Sidorenko, a Germany-based Ukrainian and a 2000 Olympic bronze medalist. The bout was held in Germany, marking just the second time Agbeko had fought outside of Africa. Sidorenko took a majority decision in a result often described as a robbery.

Mentioning Sidorenko, who is ranked one spot ahead of Agbeko at number three in THE RING's bantamweight ratings, as a potential future opponent sparks an emotional response from

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Agbeko's first defense of the alphabet strap was an entertaining 12-round majority decision over William Gonzalez. Agbeko was forced to take a lot of punches before prevailing, but was coming off a malaria-induced layoff, which probably affected his performance.

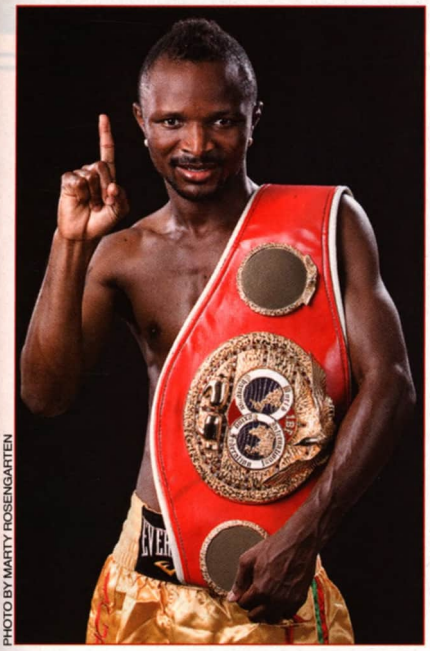

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Agbeko is justifiably proud of his IBF belt, but won't be satisfied until he is regarded as the true bantamweight champion of the world, which would mean winning the currently vacant RING championship belt.

Agbeko. Though Agbeko feels he was cheated in Germany that night, it's clear that having a loss on his record eats at him.

"It means a lot to me," he said of avenging the defeat. "Boxing is wins and losses. I want to retire undefeated. I want to retire with no losses. I want to look at my children and tell them, 'I'm undefeated.' When he wants to fight me and there's good money, I'm going to fight him and I'm going to beat him."

Agbeko fought in Ghana five months after the Sidorenko loss. It turned out to be his last under his African-based management team, from which Agbeko sought to free himself. The resulting dispute kept Agbeko out of the ring for 2½ years.

"It was very, very frustrating," said Agbeko, who kept training during the layoff. "They wouldn't release me from my contract, but they wouldn't get me any fights. That was the toughest time of my career."

After his contract finally expired in 2007, Agbeko hooked up with Scolpino through countryman Joshua Clottey, whom Scolpino also manages, and came to New York City. That September, he upset Luis Perez via seventh-round TKO to take the IBF belt.

"It was like a dream come true," Agbeko said. "I achieved what I set out to do in my career. That day was a very, very beautiful day in my career."

The entertaining scrap aired on Showtime, and some felt King Kong was on the verge of something big. Agbeko contracted malaria during his homecoming trip to Ghana, however, which led to a momentum-killing 14-month layoff.

"Sometimes you go through some hard times, and it builds you for the future," said Agbeko, who finally returned in December 2008 with a hard-fought 12-round majority decision win against southpaw William Gonzalez. It was Agbeko's first outing since reuniting with his amateur coach, Adama Ardey, and he seemed to lose some of the technical savvy he'd shown in previous wins.

To get ready for Darchinyan, Agbeko left the South Bronx for Vero Beach, Florida, where he spent nine weeks. He said the time away from his two children and friends allowed him to concentrate fully on Darchinyan. It was also a chance for Agbeko to gel with Ardey and assistant trainer Bruce Bismarck.

"We have a very good relationship, very good chemistry," Agbeko said of his team. "Everything's going good for us."

In the hours leading up to the Darchinyan fight, Agbeko received a call from Ghana's president, John Atta Mills. Ghana had been in the news that day, thanks to a visit by U.S. President Barack Obama, who had met with Mills not long before Mills phoned Agbeko. The call only boosted Agbeko's confidence.

Not that King Kong needed much encouraging.

"This fight was the biggest fight for me in my career so far," Agbeko said. "I put in my everything—my strength, my mind, everything. I knew I had to work hard to win this fight. That's why I was so, so confident. I watched most of his fights. I could see my advantages. I worked on my advantages. I had full confidence."

It all started with a name. Maybe Agbeko's dad knew what he was doing all along. ■

Don Stewart covers boxing for the Reading (Pennsylvania) Eagle and is a regular contributor to THE RING.

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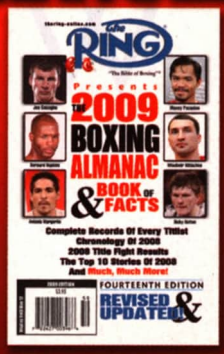

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THE THROWBACK WHO GAVE BACK

Did Arturo Gatti Do More To "Save Boxing" Than Any Other Fighter Of His Time?

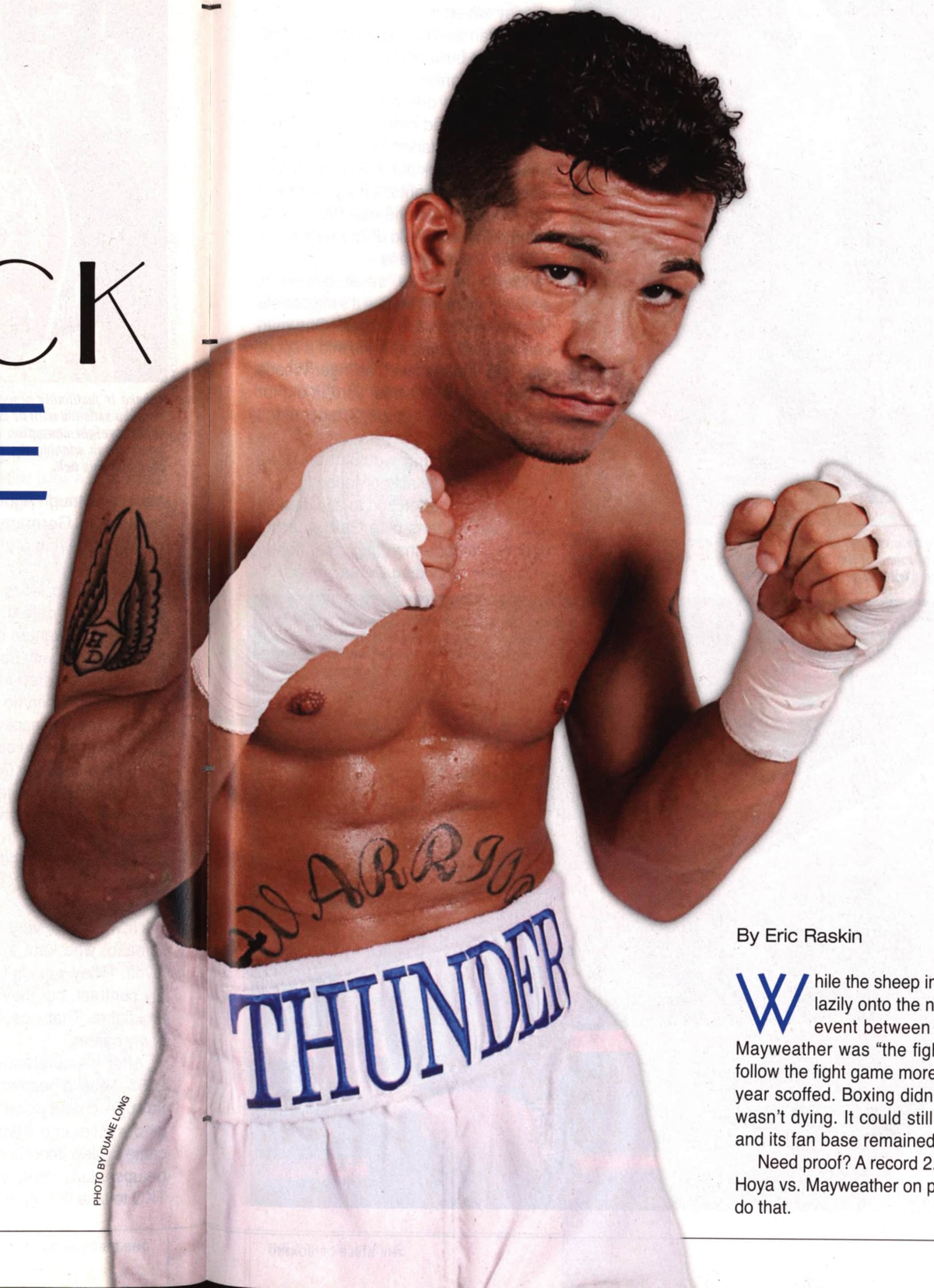


PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

By Eric Raskin

While the sheep in the mainstream media latched lazily onto the notion that the May 2007 mega-event between Oscar De La Hoya and Floyd Mayweather was "the fight to save boxing," those who follow the fight game more than just two or three nights a year scoffed. Boxing didn't need to be saved. The sport wasn't dying. It could still generate interest and money, and its fan base remained loyal and devoted.

Need proof? A record 2.4 million homes ordered De La Hoya vs. Mayweather on pay-per-view. Dying sports can't do that.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Gatti celebrates what turned out to be his final victory, as referee Lindsey Page rescues previously undefeated Thomas Damgaard in the 11th round of the January 2006 bout in Atlantic City. It was one of the few fights in which Gatti emerged without serious facial damage.

No, on the night of May 5, 2007, boxing didn't need to be saved.

And that's because Arturo Gatti had already saved it.

You can legitimately argue that Gatti did more to build boxing's fan base than any other fighter of his era. You can argue that no one else over the last 15 years created more new fans—real fans, fans who started following the sport week in and week out, not just fans who tuned in for one fighter's bouts. And you can argue that no one else did more to help boxing keep hold of its existing, but at times wavering, fans.

Maybe to say he "saved boxing" is an overstatement. Maybe it's impossible for one man to save a sport. One man can certainly inject new life into a sport, take it to another level, as Tiger Woods has for golf, as Michael Jordan did for basketball. But those sports wouldn't be dead if those players hadn't come along, and boxing wouldn't be dead without Gatti. We acknowledge that.

But it's not farfetched to say that the sport and its fans owe Gatti a larger debt of gratitude than any other fighter of his time, including De La Hoya.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Ward takes a right from Gatti in the second of their three sensational wars that helped sustain boxing during a bleak period, bring in new fans, and remind old ones why they still love the sport so much.

When news of Gatti's death, at just 37 years of age, spread on July 11 *(for more information on the circumstances behind his passing, see "Round One")*, fight fans couldn't have felt sorry for themselves. Gatti had been retired for two years and was done entertaining us. This wasn't like seeing James Dean or Buddy Holly snuffed out in his prime. Gatti was a man who was living his post-boxing life and, unless you knew him personally, wasn't a part of your life anymore.

So why were so many fight fans so profoundly affected by his death? Because the memories of what he did inside the ring were that powerful. Because the way he fought carried an emotional element, a drama that you felt even if you couldn't always find words to describe it. Because

FIGHT OF THE YEAR FIXTURES

Gatti is tied for third on the all-time list for number of times involved in THE RING's Fight of the Year. Here's a list of everyone who participated in three or more:

FIGHTER	FOTYs
Muhammad Ali	6
Carmen Basilio	5
George Foreman	4
Joe Frazier	4
Arturo Gatti	4
Rocky Graziano	3
Rocky Marciano	3
Micky Ward	3
Tony Zale	3

Gatti and Ward connect simultaneously in 2003's Fight of the Year

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

A capacity crowd filled Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall for Gatti's second fight with Ward (below), but action-packed performances were not the only reason for Gatti's tremendous popularity. He was also extremely fan-friendly and approachable (above).

he inspired. Because no matter how rich and famous he became, he was always a working-class warrior when the bell rang. Gatti was at once inhuman and overwhelmingly human. And all of these qualities allowed him to touch us. You didn't have to know him personally to have a personal connection to him, to feel the pain of loss even though you weren't really losing anything.

"I believe that it's fighters like him and fights like his," said HBO analyst Larry Merchant, "fights that thrill and move people, that sustain prizefighting. They bring people to the arenas to see the kind of raw courage that very, very few people have, on the most personal, one-to-one, competitive level there is in sports. That is, to me, the ultimate in what prizefighting is about. The show not just of skill, but of will.

PHOTO BY NICK PETROCCI

"How many times did Gatti sell out Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City? People coming by busloads to see him fight. It speaks for itself about what moves people, that what people want in a prizefight, basically, is drama. They're not looking for clinical perfection. They want drama. The ring is a stage for drama. They want to see guys who can give it and are willing to take it."

In and out of the ring, there was an instability to everything Gatti did. In nearly every victory, he flirted with defeat, and in nearly every defeat, he flirted with victory. Away from the squared circle, he chased women, he partied hard, he got into bar fights, and even took a knife to the back once. You never quite knew what would happen next with Gatti.

Ironically, that very instability brought some much-needed stability to the world of boxing. When everything else caused fans to become disenfranchised, when the bad decisions and superstars ducking big fights and disappointing pay-per-views pushed them to the edge, a Gatti fight brought with it assurance of entertainment.

Look at the year 1998, for example. It was, by any standards, a lousy year for the sport of boxing. The heavyweight title was split between Evander Holyfield and Lennox Lewis, and instead of the two of them squaring off like the public wanted, we got Lewis vs. Shannon Briggs and Zeljko Mavrovic, and Holyfield vs. Vaughn Bean. The biggest attraction in the heavyweight division, meanwhile, was still Mike Tyson, but he didn't fight all year because he was serving a suspension for biting Holyfield. The sport's biggest sub-heavyweight star, De La Hoya, fought just twice, a mandatory mismatch against Patrick Charpentier and an unnecessary rematch against faded Julio Cesar Chavez. And the guy we all wanted Oscar to fight, Felix Trinidad, competed once all year, against Mahenge Zulu. De La Hoya's other potentially intriguing opponents, Ike Quartey and Pernell Whitaker, took the year off.

So who kept fans from tuning out altogether? Gatti, who fought three times, producing the Fight of the Year against Ivan Robinson and two other solid contenders for that distinction. It didn't matter, at least not in the big picture, that Gatti went 0-3, losing on

Should The Hall Call?

It's a debate that's been raging about Gatti for the last five years or so: Is he a Hall of Famer?

This much is certain: There are pugilists better than Gatti who will not be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame. Look at Fernando Vargas; in his prime, he was able to hold his own against Ike Quartey, Winky Wright, Felix Trinidad, and Oscar De La Hoya. When Gatti stepped up to that class, he was completely non-competitive against De La Hoya and Floyd Mayweather. But Vargas has no realistic chance of being inducted in Canastota.

So the argument against Gatti, 40-9 (31), being inducted is obvious. He lost to too many ordinary fighters, beat no great ones, and got blown out against the elite.

Nevertheless, the argument in favor of Gatti is compelling.

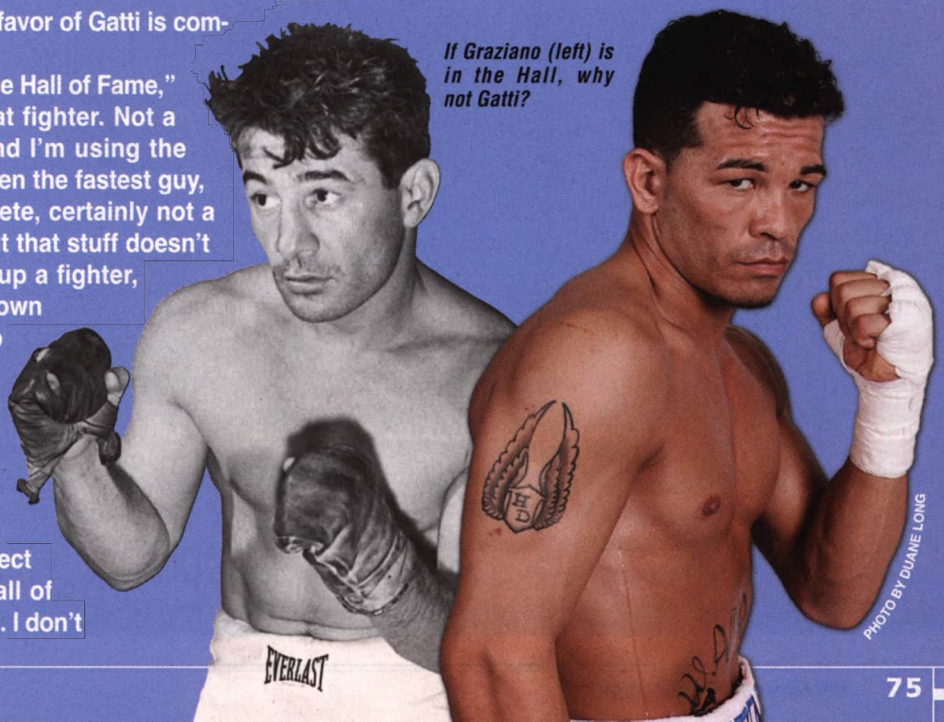
"This guy should march into the Hall of Fame," insisted DiBella. "He was a great fighter. Not a good fighter. A great fighter. And I'm using the word fighter. He may not have been the fastest guy, may not have been the best athlete, certainly not a pound-for-pound all-time guy. But that stuff doesn't matter. In terms of what makes up a fighter, the willingness to get knocked down and get up, the unwillingness to ever give up no matter how bleak things look, he was a fighter's fighter and he was an all-time-great fighter. Fifty years from now, there are going to be a lot of people talking about Arturo Gatti fights. And with all due respect to the majority of guys in the Hall of Fame, that's not the case for them. I don't think there's an iota of issue of whether he belongs in the Hall of Fame."

Peltz made the same case with a simple comparison.

"Listen, there's a lot of fighters in the Hall of Fame that may not deserve to be there based on their ability. To me, Gatti was the modern-day Rocky Graziano. And Graziano is in the Hall of Fame."

Although there will be a vocal few dissenting when he becomes eligible in 2012, Gatti is almost certain to gain induction. Let's face it: Any vote boils down in the end to a popularity contest, and when it comes to popularity, Gatti never had anything to worry about.

—E.R.



If Graziano (left) is in the Hall, why not Gatti?

PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

a cut against Angel Manfredy and then two close 10-round decisions to Robinson. It mattered that he reminded us three separate times why we watch the sport in the first place.

And he did that repeatedly throughout his career, engaging in four RING Fights of the Year, none better than his majority decision defeat in 2002 to Micky Ward in their first fight. Much like how his three excellent fights in '98 bailed out the sport, his three fights with Ward in '02 and '03 couldn't have come at a better time. The third slugfest, particularly, was sandwiched between lows like HBO Pay-Per-View peddling the Marco Antonio Barrera-Kevin Kelley and De La Hoya-Yory Boy Campas farces, Bernard Hopkins defending the middleweight title against Morrade Hakkar, and the De La Hoya-Shane Mosley rematch that produced nothing but controversy, whining, and finger-pointing.

"The Gatti-Ward trilogy was really a shot in the arm for boxing when it desperately needed it," said Lou DiBella, an executive at HBO Sports during Gatti's rise and an adviser to Ward for his three fights with Gatti. "All throughout this last generation in boxing, Gatti was desperately needed. He was never in a fight that wasn't exciting. He was the people's champion. They loved him win, lose, or draw."

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Gatti and Ward at the weigh-in for their third fight acted more like buddies than two guys who would spend the next evening trying to knock each other's head off. But by then they had formed a bond brought about by mutual respect and soon would forge an outside-of-the-ring friendship.

It's a rare quality in boxing, to be able to retain your fan base even when you lose. If there's one fighter of the last 15 years who you would argue "saved" boxing as much as Gatti did, it's De La Hoya, and one common link between the two (besides the fact that they fought each other in 2001) is that both could lose in the ring and not feel any negative effects at the box office.

Gatti's final nine fights—starting with the second Ward fight—were all at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City. Those nine fights drew 107,733 fans, an

Guiding Young Gatti

From his title victory over Tracy Harris-Patterson on, Gatti's career was well documented. But lesser known are some of the behind-the-scenes stories of his first four years as a pro. J Russell Peltz shared with THE RING some memorable insights from the early days:

"I was promoting Joe Gatti [Arturo's older brother], all to myself in 1991 when Arturo turned pro, and Arturo turned pro for Danny Duva [at Main Events]. Danny came to me one day and said, 'Listen, you give us 50 percent of Joe Gatti, and we'll give you 50 percent of Arturo Gatti.' So we made the deal, and obviously, it was one of the best deals I ever made. I had 50 percent of him until January of '98, then it became 65/35 in their favor up through the Terronn Millett fight in '02, and then I dropped out completely.

"Anyway, he fought for me a couple of times, and then I put him in at the Blue Horizon against King Solomon, which was his first loss. I remember the day after the fight, Dennis [Dueltgen, Main Events' site coordinator] called me up, and in the middle of the conversation, I said, 'And by the way, Gatti got beat last night.' He said, 'What?!' This was pre-Internet, when you didn't necessarily know the results from the night before. And I hear him screaming through the office, 'Gatti got beat!' So after that, whenever it was my turn to use Gatti, they gave me Ivan Robinson instead, because they also had the promotional rights to Robinson. They did it partially because they didn't want to have to worry so much about who Gatti was fighting.

"But in the summer of '95, I'd scheduled that Gatti was going to fight for me on local TV in Atlantic City, against Barrington Francis at Caesars. And that's when they got the offer to fight Tracy Harris-Patterson in December. So about a week or two before the fight, Dino Duva calls me

average of 11,970 per show. The room is configured to hold about 12,700 for boxing. In other words, Gatti damned near averaged a sellout over the course of nine fights, all of which came after his 30th birthday.

"He was the franchise in Atlantic City in recent years," said Hall of Fame Philadelphia promoter J Russell Peltz, who co-promoted Gatti from 1991-2002. "You can talk all you want about some of the fighters they force-feed down your throat on television today, but if you took them out of a casino, they'd fight in front of empty houses. Nobody would pay. More than half the guys you see on Showtime or HBO couldn't fill a small club, and Gatti was filling Boardwalk Hall on a regular basis. And it wasn't comps; it wasn't high rollers from casinos. It was die-hard fight fans who drove down to Atlantic City to see him fight because he was one of the few fighters of his generation that was worth the price of a ticket."

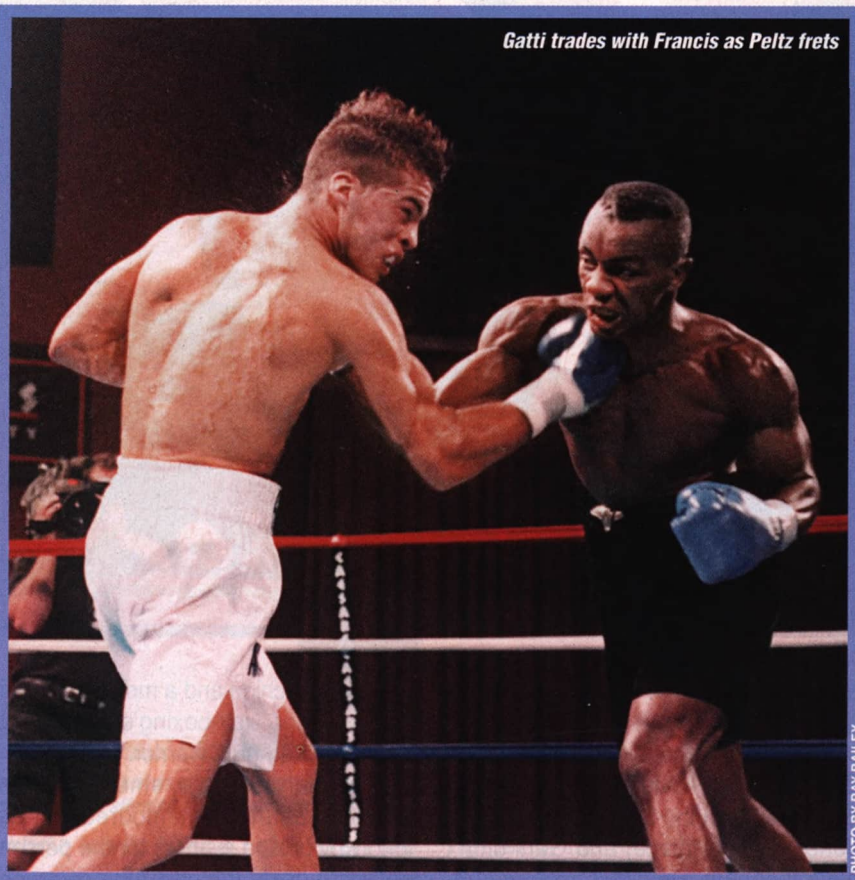
In most sports, ability is what matters most and winning is what puts butts in seats. Very few athletes in other sports sell big based on excitement. Sure, there have been occasional competitors who draw because they're uniquely entertaining, smaller, speed-based guys like Ichiro Suzuki or Michael Vick or Allen Iverson. But for the most part, in the major team sports, ticket sales are based on whether the team is winning, and the biggest stars are generally the most talented players.

Boxing is different. Boxing is a sport where an athlete who's exciting will often receive bigger paychecks than a more talented athlete whose fights lack action. Gatti's pure ability was comparable to maybe a Chad Pennington in football or a Derek Fisher in basketball—good, certainly world-class, but not an all-star. Yet in terms of star power, Gatti was a Tom Brady or a Kobe Bryant.

"The way he fought and the way he carried himself, people really gravitated toward him," said Ward, Gatti's most famous rival, close friend, and trainer for his final fight. "You look at the way he fought, he had this heart and guts that was unbelievable. I mean, I don't know if he brought more fans into boxing than Oscar, but he was at least right up there. When the sport was going down, he brought it back. And it was because of how he fought. Anybody can fight great when they're ahead. But me and him, we had to fight most of our fights after being down on points or being knocked down and come back hard. That's what a true warrior is. You can win a fight easy against a guy who isn't as good as you, but to go down and get up and win a fight is a whole different thing."

Not to keep comparing Gatti's popularity to that of De La Hoya, but DiBella, thanks to his years spent at HBO, has an interesting take on whether "The Golden Boy," clearly more of a household name, was actually more popular than Gatti.

"Gatti's ratings when he fought live on HBO were as good as De La Hoya's," DiBella said. "And by the way, Gatti's whole career was pretty much fought, other than with one or two exceptions, on HBO, not on pay-per-view.



Gatti trades with Francis as Peltz frets

PHOTO BY RAY BAILEY

up and says, 'We're pulling Arturo off your show.' It was the main event, so I went crazy! 'What are you talking about? This guy's not going to give him a problem.' He said, 'We can't take a chance, we don't know, it could be a tough fight.' I left messages for [Gatti's manager] Pat Lynch, 'Pat, you can't do this, please call me.' So I just went crazy on Dino, and at the very end, right before he signed off, he said, 'I'm telling you right now, if Gatti loses this fight, I will never talk to you again!'"

Gatti struggled a bit but won the fight, so that wasn't the last time Peltz and Duva ever spoke. But clearly Peltz' reputation for matching his fighters tough wasn't exactly in line with how Main Events liked moving their brighter prospects. And it's interesting to look back and wonder, if Main Events hadn't become so controlling after the Solomon fight and allowed Peltz to put Gatti in with a few more dangerous opponents early on, whether we'd even know the name Arturo Gatti today.

—E.R.

What Gatti Meant To Me

Every fight fan has that moment that hooks him, that makes him instantly regret every moment he'd wasted up until then not watching boxing. For me, that moment came courtesy of Arturo Gatti. I was an impressionable 22-year-old aspiring sports writer who'd stumbled into boxing, covering my first fight card, headlined by Lennox Lewis vs. Andrew Golota. The main event was memorable for all the wrong reasons. The co-feature was memorable for all the right reasons. It was Gatti vs. Gabe Ruelas, and it was the Fight of the Year for 1997. Gatti took a pounding in the fourth round, nearly collapsed, and roared back to liquefy Ruelas with a left hook in the fifth. Then he collapsed to his knees in a heap of ecstasy and relief. Until seeing that, my job as associate editor of THE RING was just intended to be a brief stop on the road to a job covering baseball or football or something. But the drama of Gatti-Ruelas made me a boxing fan and got my heart into the idea of becoming a boxing writer.

I was ringside for 18 of Gatti's final 20 fights. I was privileged enough to hold press passes for both Robinson fights and all three Ward fights. The only times I left a Gatti fight disappointed were when they ended too soon, like the kayos of Reyes Munoz or Leo Dorin. Most of the time, I left them in awe—in awe of the atmosphere his fans created and the punishment he was willing to take in order to win.

I didn't know him all that well personally; I interviewed him once in person, once over the phone, and hung out with him for a couple of hours when we did the iconic RING cover shoot with Arturo and Micky holding baseball bats. I can't claim to miss Gatti, the way that his brother or Pat Lynch or Micky Ward or any number of people who called him a friend do.

But I feel an emptiness and a disbelief over his death anyway. Gatti was more responsible than any other fighter for drawing me into the twisted, wonderful world of boxing. For that, I thank him. And I hope that before his all-too-brief life was over, he developed an awareness of how many people out there wanted to thank him for the very same thing.

—E.R.

The fight that made Raskin a fan

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

So in a lot of ways, I think he had a bigger following. I don't think he was the star, the money machine, obviously not. Oscar had the movie-star looks and the crossover from the Latino market to the general marketplace, and Gatti didn't have that stuff. He didn't have the advantage of being an Olympic gold medalist. But that being said, I think we're talking about the two guys that really transcended the sport unlike any other fighters of their time. One of them was a money machine and a movie star, and the other one was boxing's epitome of the blood-and-guts warrior."

As fondly as he's remembered in the ring, Gatti is remembered just as fondly by boxing insiders for the person he was outside the ring. One common theme is how eager he always was to connect with his fans face-to-face.

"You'd never hear a story of how Arturo blew off a fan asking for an autograph or to take a picture with him," said HBO unofficial fight judge Harold Lederman. "I remember the times after fights when Gatti would hold court at any local bar in Atlantic City. If his face wasn't broken up and he didn't have to go to the hospital after a fight, you'd always find him there talking about the fight, surrounded by about 50 or 60 people."

As DiBella recalled, you could sometimes find him there even if his face was a mess.

"After one of the fights he lost, he was at the after-party, wearing a suit and dark glasses, and I saw him having a drink and talking to some people, and I was like, 'Why's Arturo crying?' Then I walked closer and I realized he wasn't crying. From beneath his dark glasses,

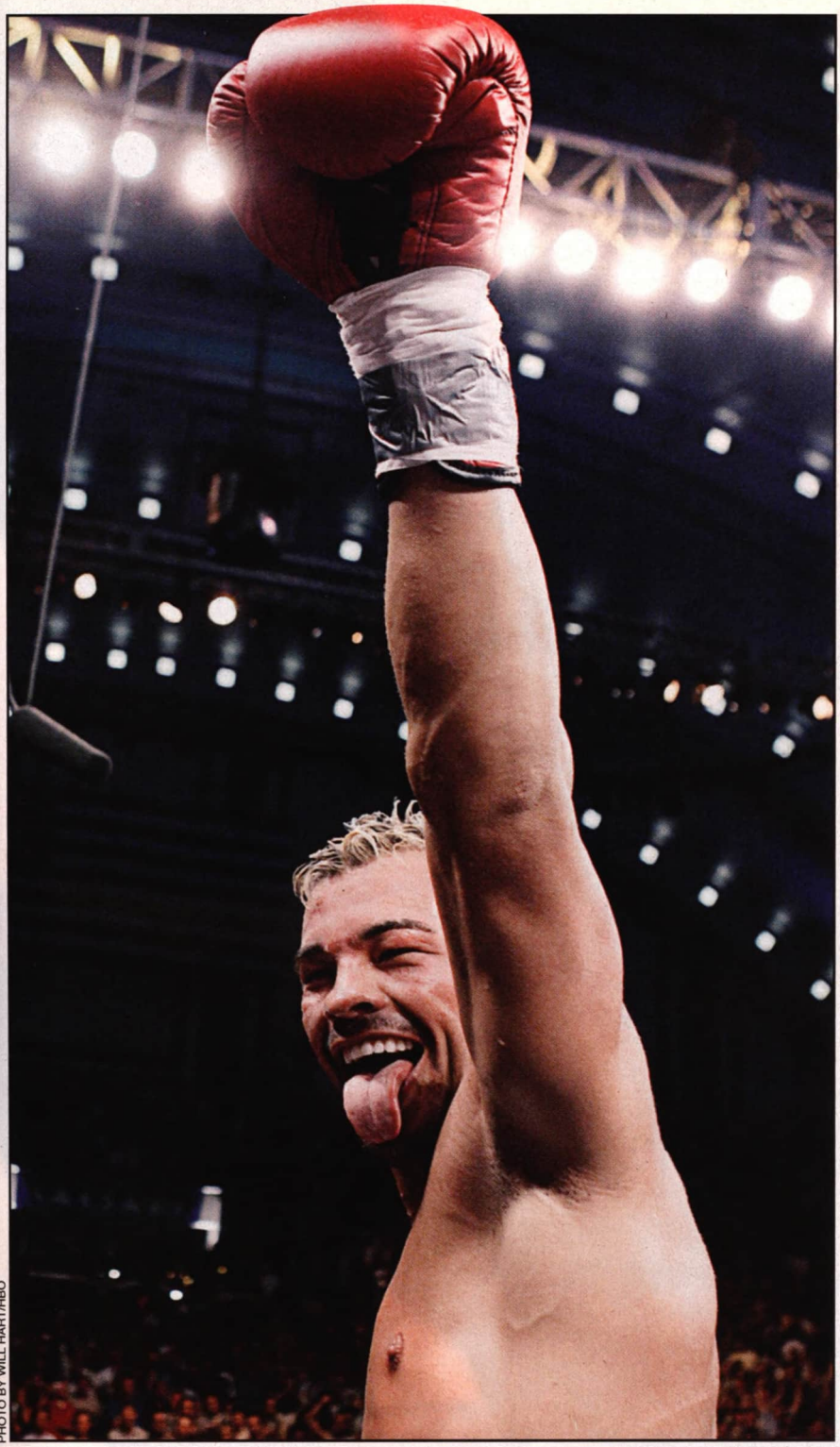


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Gatti reveals his goofy side while celebrating his January 2004 decision over Gianluca Branco for the vacant WBC 140-pound belt. His exuberance was contagious and affected all who saw him fight.

drips of blood were coming down his face. He was like, 'I'm fine, man; it's just bleeding a little bit.'

"He was amazing with his fans, he was amazing with people, that's why he became such a legend in Atlantic City and the biggest attraction in the whole town. After a fight, everyone knew that Arturo was going to mingle with his fans, hang out with them, and spend time with them. That was, in his mind, part of his job and part of what he loved to do. He loved to be around people. Even when he became a big, big star, he was always one of the most approachable people you could ever see."

When it comes to feel-good stories in boxing, very few in recent times compare with the friendship struck up by Gatti and Ward. They pounded each other like Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier, but instead of allowing their rivalry to spawn animosity, they grew extremely close and were routinely referred to in the media as "blood brothers."

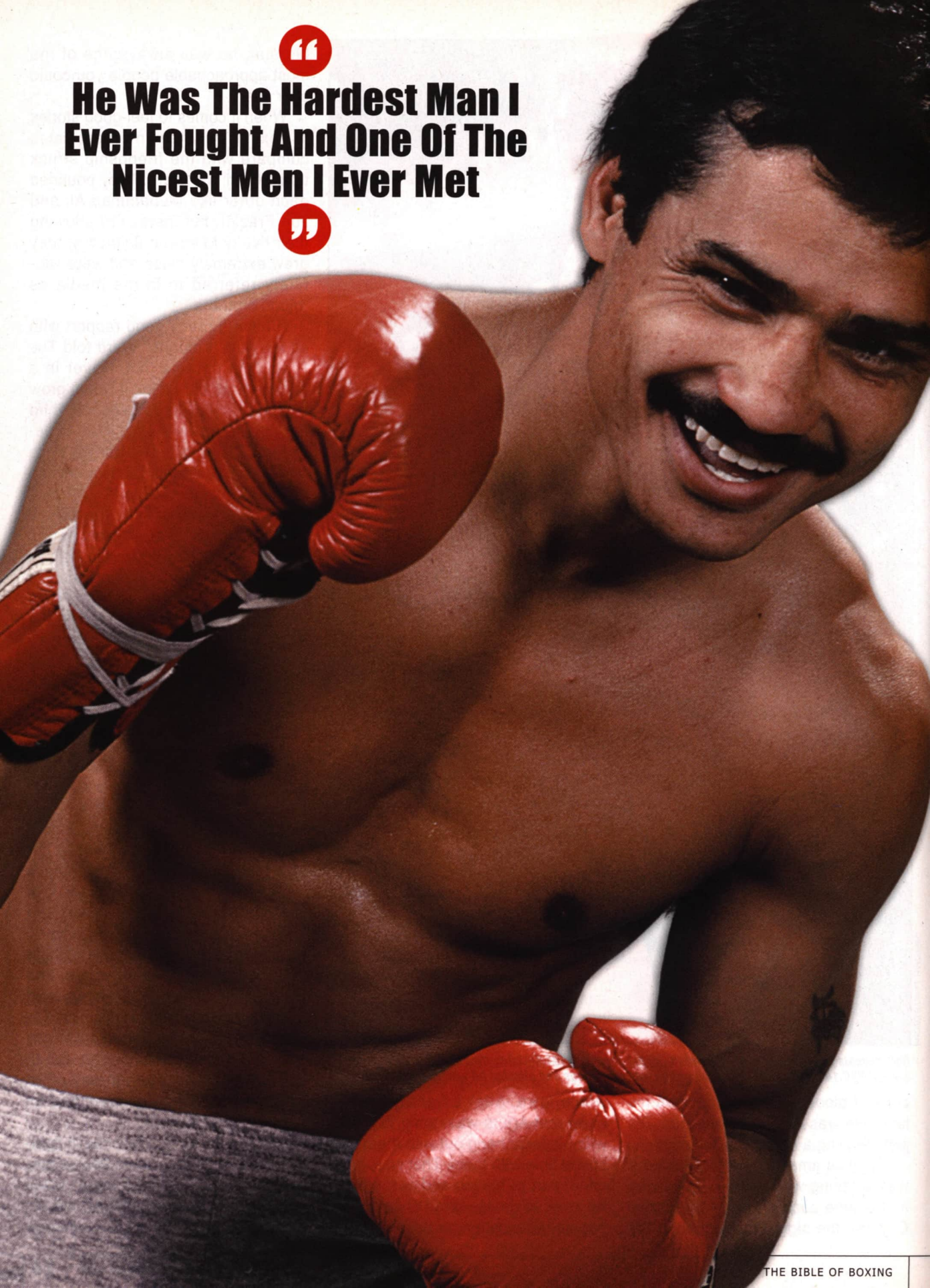
"I have a pretty good rapport with all the guys I fought," Ward told THE RING, "but not like this. Never in a million years did I think it would grow into what it grew into. Before our third fight, there was a mutual respect between both of us. But after we were done fighting, it really blossomed into more of a real friendship.

"What I miss most is the phone calls. The calls ... at different hours. We both kept odd hours, so I'd call him late sometimes or he'd call me late sometimes. It's funny, when we'd be together, we'd talk to each other, and people would be like, 'What are they talking about?' We understood each other, but other people were like, 'What the hell are they talking about?' We had our own little language."

In a different way, Gatti and his fans spoke their own little language, a language where swelling and bleeding would prompt a response of "Gatti! Gatti!" and those deafening chants would then prompt a response in the form of thunderous left hooks. With his fists, with his heart, with the pained look on his face when a punch hurt him, with the determined look on his face when he battled back, Gatti spoke to fight fans without the need for words. And they spoke to him by showing up next time even if he lost this time.

Maybe it's an overstatement to say that Arturo Gatti saved boxing. But at the very least, more than any other fighter of his time, he reminded us why we love this sport.

He was the kind of throwback fighter your grandfather could appreciate. And he was the kind of fighter you'll definitely be telling your grandkids all about. ■


“He Was The Hardest Man I Ever Fought And One Of The Nicest Men I Ever Met”

ALEXIS ARGUELLO

By Gavin Evans

Think of Latino machismo in pugilistic terms and a certain image springs to mind: belligerent, snarling, ruthless, devil-may-care; never-take-a-backward step. When applied outside the ring, we expect to see the wild, hard-living, binge-drinking lothario. Roberto Duran would certainly be the poster boy, and below him, Ruben Olivares, and further still, Ricardo Mayorga.

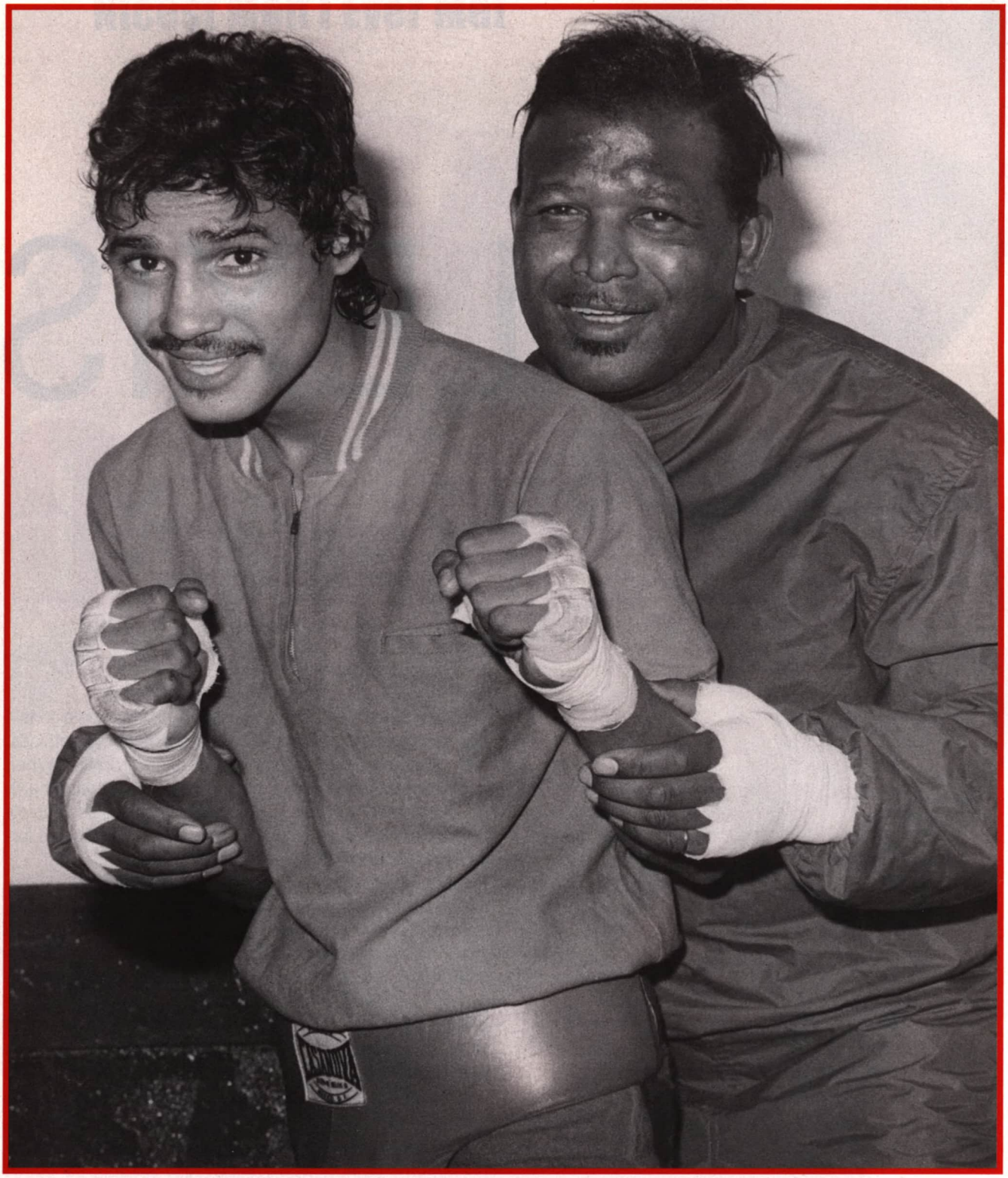
But Latino boxing has also produced a different kind of hero: the precision killer, the cool man of control. Think Eder Jofre, Salvador Sanchez, Ricardo Lopez, Juan Manuel Marquez. The Latino who epitomized this breed was "The Explosive Thin Man," Alexis Arguello—both in the way he fought and in the way he conducted himself outside the ring, at least during his boxing days. His was the talk-softly-and-carry-a-big-stick kind of understated machismo: not a man you would want to mess with, but not one who needed to remind you of this.

Outside the ropes, the habits of the Duran-type macho men—strutting, posing, preening, and sneering—were way, way below Arguello. He was unfailingly courteous, even to his opponents, and he charmed the press with his polite, respectful ways and the sometimes self-deprecating honesty of

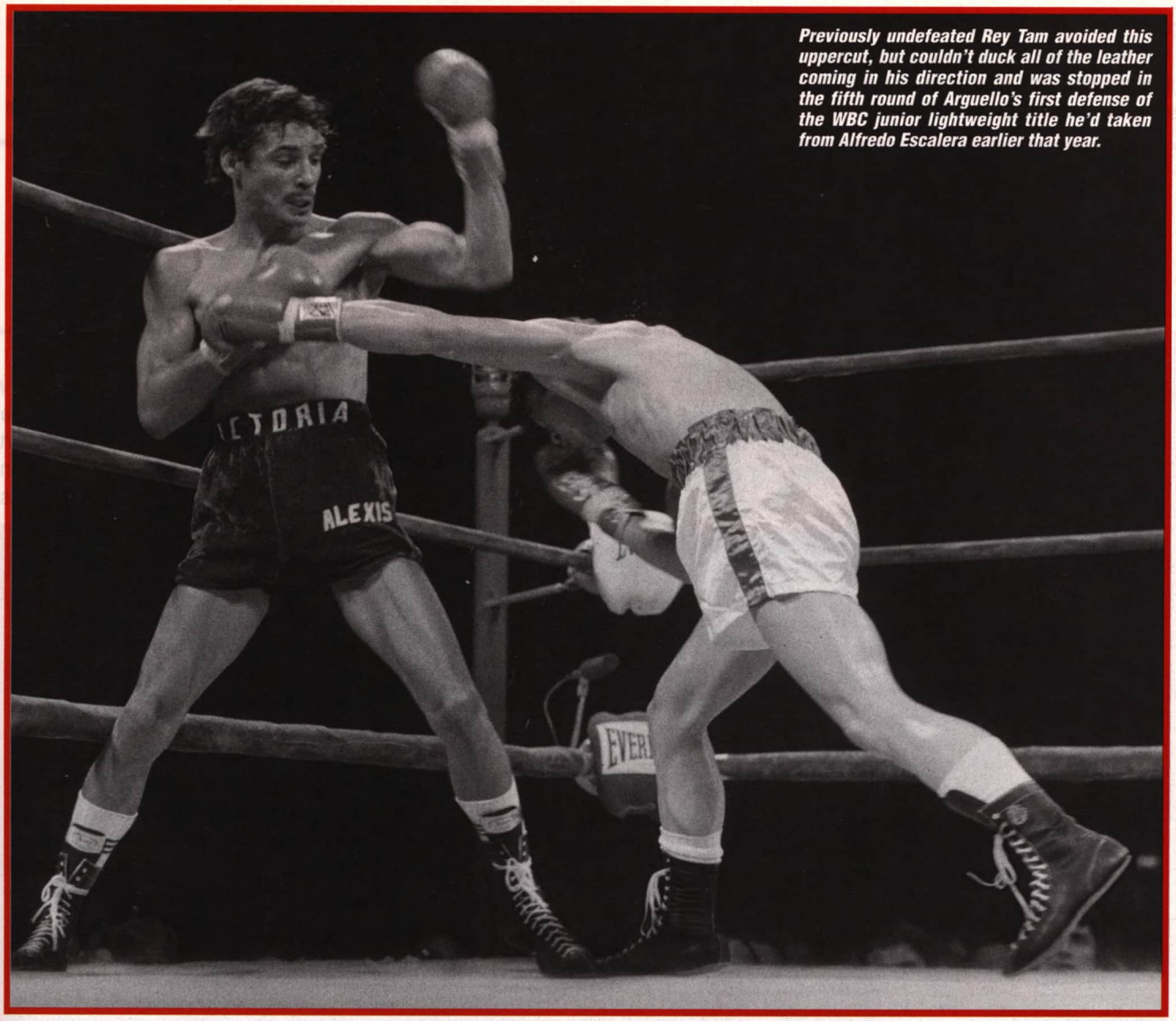
his answers, as well as his erudite views on subjects that went beyond the norm for men of his calling.

But what we gradually learned about this mustachioed Nicaraguan was that this self-control was a crust that covered a bubbling cauldron of emotions, which spilled out after his retirement. Two marriages broke down amid lurid tales of promiscuity, cocaine abuse, alcoholism, and domestic violence. He was eventually rehabilitated, but suffered from deep depression and admitted to contemplating suicide several times, before finally pulling the trigger on July 1, 2009.

His political life was no less confused. He supported the Sandinistas until they seized his property, then supported the



Arguello poses with boyhood hero Sugar Ray Robinson prior to his Los Angeles bout with Ruben Olivares in 1974 for the WBA featherweight title.



Previously undefeated Rey Tam avoided this uppercut, but couldn't duck all of the leather coming in his direction and was stopped in the fifth round of Arguello's first defense of the WBC junior lightweight title he'd taken from Alfredo Escalera earlier that year.

Contras, and actually took up arms for their cause. Then Arguello made peace with the Sandinistas, prompting his disputed election as mayor of Managua, and at the time of his death was said to be on the verge of splitting with them once more.

But none of this would be of much interest were it not for the fact that he was one of the all-time greats in his chosen profession: a three-division titleholder who came close to making it four (and who set the trend for the division-hopping of later years).

Arguello grew up in poverty in the Nicaraguan capital, Managua, and left school after completing the third grade. He then joined his brothers in scratching around for work, and along the way developed a childhood obsession with boxing history that propelled him to the gym. At the age of 16, he sparred with Olivares and went home with a black eye (after enraging the Mexican with his superbly educated left jab). But instead of being put off by his beating, Arguello begged his mother's approval for his plan to turn professional. She warned him he would get hurt.

But the 5'10" bantamweight pressed on, and by the age of 21, when he traveled to Panama City to challenge Ernesto Marcel for the WBA featherweight title, his record stood at 36-3, and he had won his previous 13, 12 via knockout.

Still, there were several factors counting against him. First, Arguello was still a super bantamweight (weighing just one-quarter of a pound over the 122-pound limit). Second, he was up against a more experienced titleholder, having his fourth title defense and his 46th fight at the age of 26. Third, Arguello lacked foot speed, something the elusive Panamanian had in abundance. So, he found himself outboxed and lost a unanimous decision by margins of six points (twice) and four points.

But, as always after setbacks, Arguello bounced back quickly. Nine months and four wins later he traveled to Inglewood, California, to take on Marcel's successor, Olivares, for the same belt, and knocked out the Mexican legend in the 13th round.

Arguello proved to be a busy titleholder, always willing to travel. Over the next three years he picked up 16 wins in seven countries, including four in title defenses. Although he never unified the

title, there was no doubt he was the top featherweight in the world (the WBC titlists during that span were Bobby Chacon, Olivares, and David Kotey).

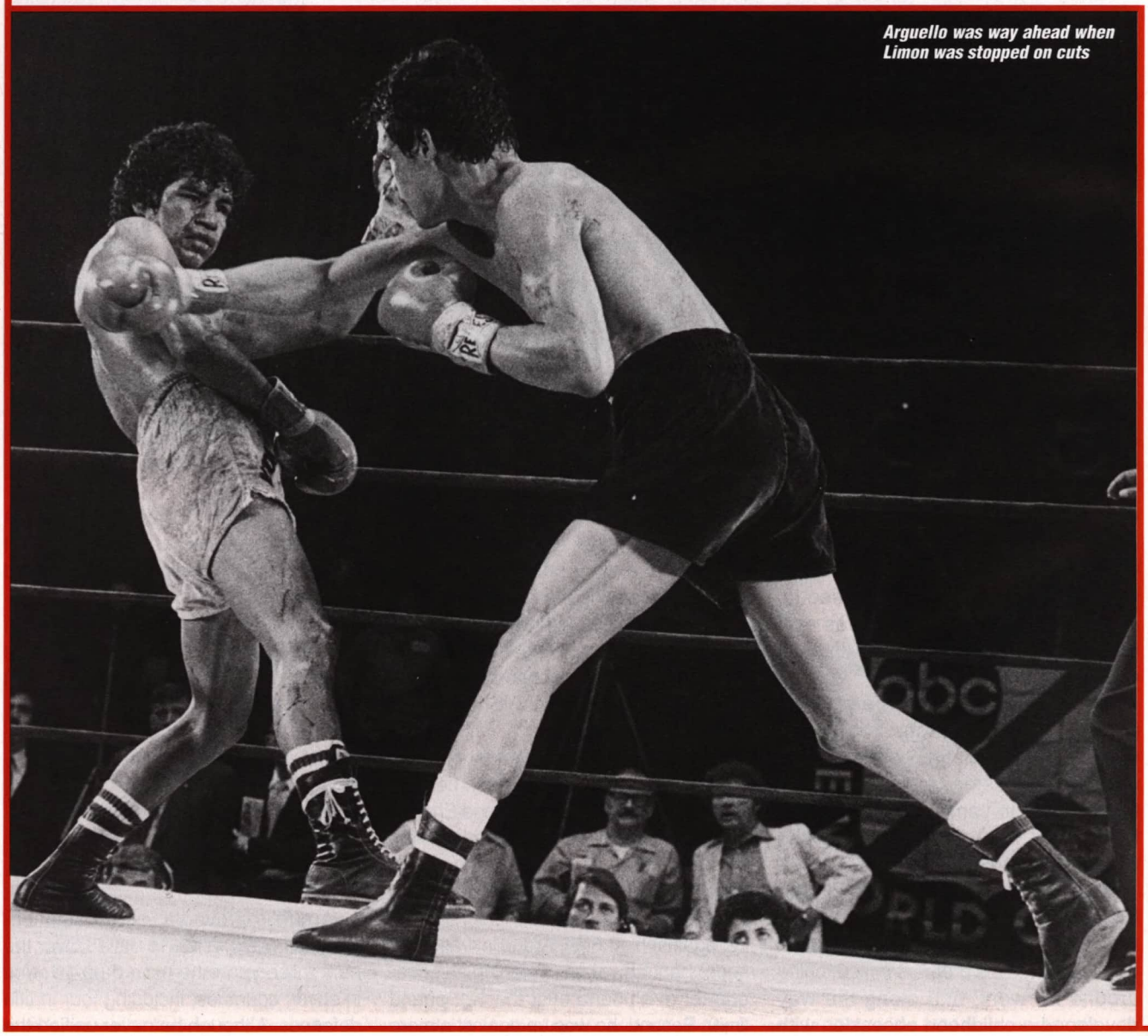
Then, in January 1978, aged 25 but already a veteran of 61 fights, he moved up to challenge Puerto Rico's Alfredo Escalera for the WBC 130-pound crown, once again going to the titleholder's hometown.

Escalera, also 25 and making the 11th defense of the belt, fought ferociously, but

Arguello's 10

•KO 13 Ruben Olivares, Inglewood, California, November 23, 1974: Arguello, 22, ahead on two of the cards, dropped Olivares twice in the 13th, the second time for the full count (they threw lefts simultaneously, but it was the Nicaraguan's that told).

•KO 13 Alfredo Escalera, Bayamon, Puerto Rico, January 28, 1978: In a brutal struggle, dubbed "The Bloody Battle Of Bayamon," Arguello turned back a courageous effort from Escalera, carving up his face in the process. When referee Arthur Mercante stopped it at 2:36, Arguello was



Arguello was way ahead when Limon was stopped on cuts

Arguello's greater skill, better jab, and heavier artillery gave him the edge. He scored a knockdown in the second round and his precision strikes cut Escalara's mouth and eye and broke his nose. But every time the Nicaraguan would seem on the verge of victory, the Puerto Rican would rally, until finally, in the 13th round, with the blood flowing freely, the bout was stopped.

A week earlier, Duran had stopped Esteban De Jesus for the second time

Greatest Hits

ahead by five, six, and seven points.

•KO 13 Alfredo Escalera, Rimini, Italy, February 4, 1979: Another gory battle (with both men badly cut), but the gap widened from their first encounter. Escalera was down three times before being knocked out.

•KO 11 Rafael Limon, New York City, July 8, 1979: Arguello was superior in every department to the man who would go on to win the WBC title. Referee Tony Perez stopped it because of a bad cut over "Bazooka's" right eye, but Arguello was way ahead.

Arguello was too much for a youthful Mancini

•KO 7 Bobby Chacon, Inglewood, California, November 16, 1979: The Californian put up a tenacious fight, and despite a badly cut right eye, was slightly ahead going into the seventh round. But Arguello dropped him with a left hook and was dominating before referee John Thomas stopped it at the end of the round.

•KO 11 Ruben Castillo, Tucson, Arizona, January 20, 1980: Castillo entered the ring with a 46-0 (24) record and fought a tremendous fight. Even so, Arguello's hold gradually tightened, and the Nicaraguan was up on two of the three cards when referee Octavio Meyran rescued Castillo.

•KO 5 Rolando Navarrete, San Juan, Puerto Rico, April 27, 1980: The Filipino lost every round before being stopped. This was Arguello's final WBC super featherweight title defense. Navarrete went on to win the same title two years later.

•W 15 Jim Watt, London, England, June 20, 1981: The Scottish southpaw was on a long winning streak, but Arguello dominated by margins of 10 points and four points (twice) to take the WBC lightweight title.

•KO 14 Ray Mancini, Atlantic City, New Jersey, October 3, 1981: Arguello gradually took over, weakening the American with bodypunches. He dropped Mancini with two lefts and a right in the 14th, and referee Tony Perez stopped it.

•KO 4 Billy Costello, Reno, Nevada, February 9, 1986: Two months shy of his 34th birthday, Arguello took on the man who had held the WBC title until six months earlier. In round four, Arguello trapped the 36-1 (18) Costello on the ropes and blasted away with both hands, forcing the stoppage.

and there was talk about a Panama-Nicaragua showdown between Arguello and Duran, but it never happened. Instead, Duran moved up to welterweight, while Arguello remained at junior lightweight for another 2½ years.

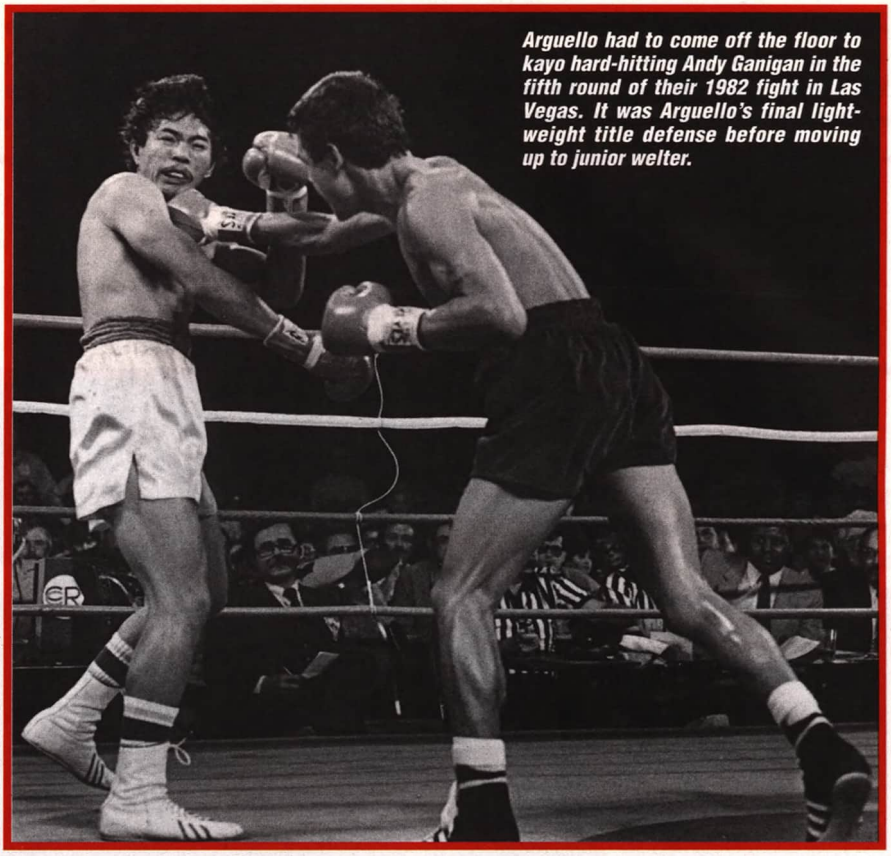
Arguello's next big fight was a return with Escalera, in Italy, in February 1979. By then Arguello had improved and Escalera had slipped. This time the Puerto Rican was dropped three times before being knocked out in the 13th.

Arguello was simply too big, powerful, and polished for anyone else in the junior lightweight division and eventually made eight defenses of the title. Most of his challengers were out of the top drawer; some (Chacon, Rafael Limon, Rolando Navarrete) went on to win titles. But they all fell to "El Flaco Explosivo," who put on a series of highlight-reel stoppages, displaying his power, accuracy, and timing to spectacular effect.

His only setback during this spell was a 10-round, majority-decision loss to lightweight contender Vilomar Fernandez in a non-title bout set at 136 pounds. Arguello easily won the return.

Having run out of opposition, he moved up to lightweight and after victories over future titleholders Cornelius Boza-Edwards (KO 8) and Jose Luis Ramirez (W 10), he traveled to London to challenge Jim Watt for the WBC belt.

The 32-year-old Scottish southpaw was making his fifth defense, and having turned back challenges from Sean O'Grady and Howard Davis, was convinced he would be too skilled for the Nicaraguan. Instead, he found himself outboxed and outpunched, losing a clear-cut unanimous decision.

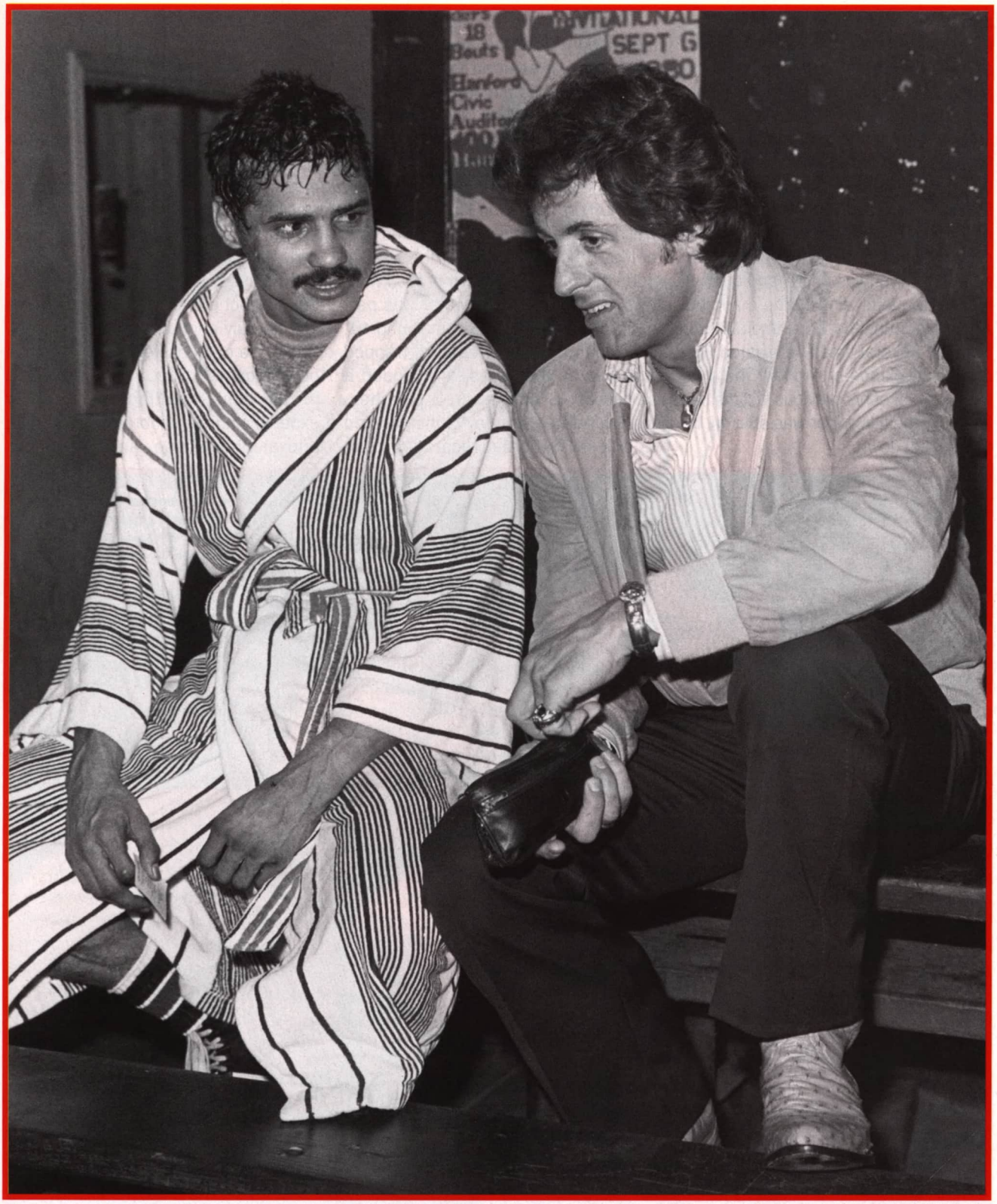


Arguello had to come off the floor to kayo hard-hitting Andy Ganigan in the fifth round of their 1982 fight in Las Vegas. It was Arguello's final lightweight title defense before moving up to junior welter.

Arguello's first 135-pound defense was in 1981 in Atlantic City against extremely popular 20-year-old Ray "Boom Boom" Mancini, who was 20-0 at the time and considered one of the brightest and most compelling young talents in the U.S. The short, powerfully built Italian-American earned his shot with a convincing victory over Jose Luis Ramirez and fought extremely courageously. Even so, Arguello gradually wore him down with his heavier and more accurate punches, stopping him in the 14th round. Seven months later, Mancini won the WBA title and held it for over two years, but never showed interest in a return with Arguello.

WBC lightweight titleholder Jim Watt was an outstanding technician, but his skills were not enough to prevent Arguello from taking the title away from the Scotsman when they met in London in June 1981. Arguello won a unanimous 15-round decision for his third title in three divisions.

After three more title defenses, Arguello decided to move up to 140-pounds with the aim of becoming the first man to win titles at four weights. He started his campaign with a second-round knockout of Kevin Rooney (Mike Tyson's future trainer), and then went into perhaps the biggest fight of his career, against the mercurial Aaron Pryor, who at the age of 27 was making



Hollywood types such as Sylvester Stallone were attracted as much by Arguello's urbane manner and charm as his fighting prowess.

the sixth defense of the WBA junior welterweight title he'd won from the great Antonio Cervantes.

Promoted by Bob Arum as the "Battle Of The Champions," it was easy to make a case for either man. Pryor was a natural lightweight (he always said he fought at 140 only because the likes of Mancini avoided him at 135), but was far more accustomed to the 140 pounds than Arguello, who was having only his second fight at this limit. Pryor also had youth, speed, and work rate in his favor. Those picking Arguello pointed to his accuracy and one-punch knockout

power, as well as his advantages in height and reach (3½ inches in both) and his far greater experience (at the age of 30, he was having his 83rd fight and 21st title fight).

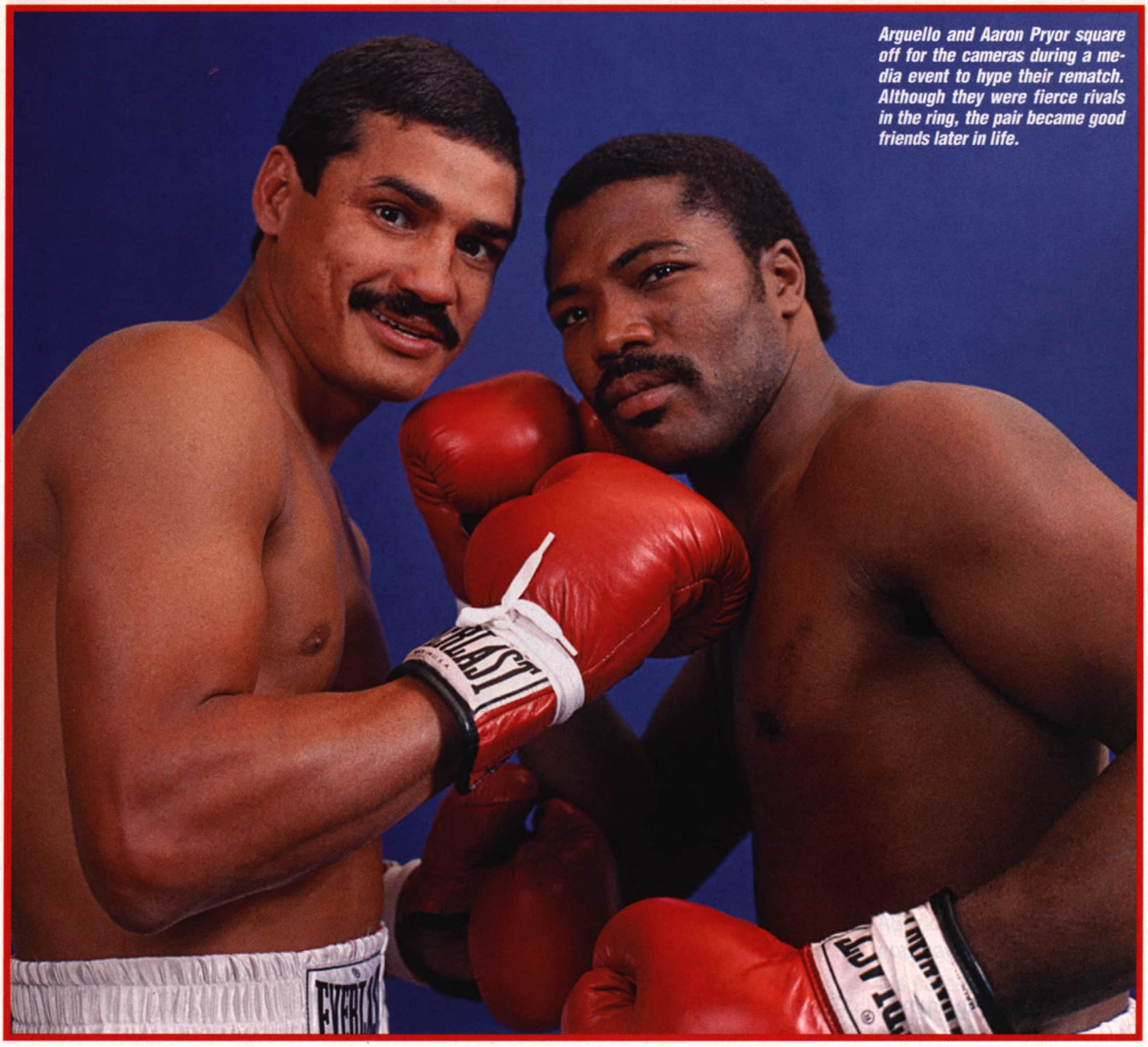
The fight turned out to be even better than anticipated (THE RING's Fight of the Year for 1982 and Fight of the Decade), 14 rounds of relentlessly compelling action between two evenly matched men whose styles blended perfectly. Pryor was busier and quicker, his jab frequently finding the mark, but Arguello's punches were undoubtedly heavier. Several times he blasted Pryor with the kinds of artillery that had taken out 62 of his previous victims, but although the titleholder was shaken, he never went down.

Then, in round 13, Arguello landed a huge right cross that snapped Pryor's head back. It seemed like the punch might change the momentum, although by the end of the 13th "The Hawk" was still ahead on two of the cards.

Pryor's trainer, Panama Lewis, who'd later be jailed and banned for removing the stuffing from Luis Resto's gloves, was overheard saying: "Hand me that bottle ... no, not that one, the special one I mixed." It was never proved what was in the bottle (only water was permitted by the rules). But in round 14, Pryor came out rejuvenated, trapped Arguello on the ropes, and landed a series of 23 unanswered punches, forcing referee Stanley Christodoulou to stop it. The great Nicaraguan collapsed and lay on the canvas for several minutes.

The controversy over the "special bottle" prompted the WBA to order a return bout 10 months later (by which time Arguello had picked up another couple of wins), but this time Pryor made better use of his speed and footwork, and after nine fast-paced rounds, he put Arguello down for the count midway through the 10th.

It seemed clear the man once dubbed the "perfect boxer" was past his prime and he duly announced his retirement. Sadly, the demons kept at bay through boxing came to haunt him, resulting in him contemplating suicide after experiencing marital breakdowns, drug and alcohol abuse, and, inevitably,



Arguello and Aaron Pryor square off for the cameras during a media event to hype their rematch. Although they were fierce rivals in the ring, the pair became good friends later in life.

PHOTO BY MIGUEL ALVAREZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The final victory: Arguello and Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega raise their arms in triumph after the former boxer was elected mayor of Managua on November 21, 2008. Sadly, his success in the political arena did not bring him happiness.

financial problems (partly caused by his role in financing the anti-Sandinista Contras). So it came as no surprise when, two years later, the 33-year-old Arguello returned to action in 1986.

In his second comeback bout, fought at welterweight, Arguello took on former WBC 140-pound titlist Billy Costello and stopped him in the fourth round. He was back in contention, but was diagnosed with a heart defect and forced to return to retirement and further into despair.

Arguello made a sad, final comeback in 1994, at the age of 42, picking up a majority decision over the 2-12-1 Jorge Palomares before losing a unanimous decision to the 17-3-1 Scott Walker, after which he retired for good with an 80-8 (64) record.

Looking back over a career that spanned more than a quarter of a century, it could be said without much fear of contradiction that Alexis Arguello was among the top 10 boxers, pound-for-pound, of this era. He was at the top of his game for about eight years (1974-'82) and was probably at his peak at 130-pounds, where only Floyd Mayweather could have claim to rival him for the all-time top spot. At featherweight and lightweight he was certainly within range of the all-time top 10. He probably could have won a world title at super bantam, and had it not been for the superlative Pryor, he would certainly have won a title at junior welterweight.

Arguello was a boxer who made every punch count and seldom wasted energy. Fighting behind a high guard with good head movement, he was outstanding at blocking and parrying and had one of the hardest, most accurate jabs in the business. He could make men lose control of their bodily functions with his bodyblows, and time and again took them out with a single hook or cross to the jaw—and he never let anyone off the hook. If he had a flaw it was that he could be out-speeded, although between Marcel and Pryor, nobody was fast enough or good enough to take advantage for very long.

On top of this, Arguello was always a credit to his sport when in the public light, particularly during his glory years. "He was the hardest man I ever fought and one of the nicest men I ever met," said Watt. "The first time I met him was at a press conference, and he walked over, held out his hand, and said, 'Pleased to meet you, Jim. How's your family?' That's how he conducted himself, impeccably."

In the end, his story was one all-too-familiar in the history of our sport, although in Arguello's case it was played out on a grander stage. Without the adulation, the constant challenges, the day-to-day discipline, and the sense of purpose that boxing provided, he was incapable of holding it together. In this sense, as in others, he belongs with his heroes, Joe Louis and Sugar Ray Robinson—deeply flawed as a human being, sure, but as a fighting man, immense. ■

Gavin Evans is a London-based freelancer and regular contributor to THE RING.

Summary

Heavyweights

Derric Rossy W 10 Carl Drumond
Justin Whitehead W 10 Solomon Haumono
Oliver McCall W 10 Franklin Lawrence
Timor Ibragimov KO 5 Willie Palms
Deontay Wilder KO 1 Travis Allen
Brian Minto Tech. Win 4 Donnell Holmes
Travis Kauffman KO 1 William Shahan
Lance Whitaker KO 1 Mathew Ellis
Seth Mitchell KO 1 Andrae Carthron
Eugene Hill W 8 Zack Page

Cruiserweights

Danny Green KO 5 Julio Dominguez
B.J. Flores KO 4 Epifanio Mendoza
Yunier Dorticos KO 4 Hilario Guzman
Dominic Vea KO 2 Seiaute Mailata
Hector Roman KO 2 Nestor Insaurralde
Edson Borges KO 1 Paulo Lopes

Light Heavyweights

Gabriel Campillo W 12 Beibut Shumenov
(Retains WBA Title)
Roy Jones KO 10 Jeff Lacy
Juergen Braehmer KO 11 Aleksy Kuziemski
Prince Badi Ajamu W 12 DeAndrey Abron
Tommy Karpency W 10 Chuck Mussachio
Gayrat Ahmedov KO 2 Douglas Otieno
Matt Vanda 8 Ted Muller
Gilberto Domingos KO 1 Jesus Chaves

Super Middleweights

Robert Stieglitz KO 11 Karoly Balzsay
William Gare W 12 Rigoberto Alvarez
Rodolfo Magno W 12 Thomas Hengstberger
Eduard Gutknecht W 12 Josival Teixeira
Jerson Ravelo W 8 Willis Lockett
Tarvis Simms W 8 Marcus Upshaw
Anthony Dirrell KO 7 Alfredo Contreras

Middleweights

Sam Soliman KO 7 Sintung Kietbusaba
Leroy Brown KO 10 Chris Stewart
Daniel Jacobs W 10 Ishe Smith
Andy Lee KO 8 Anthony Shuler
Tetsuya Suzuki KO 8 Pil-Seung Oh
Angel Hernandez KO 6 Antwun Echols
Emiliano Gomez KO 1 Silvio De Mello

Junior Middleweights

Zaurbek Baysangurov W 12 Eromosele Albert
Alfredo Angulo KO 2 Gabriel Rosado

Middleweight Daniel Jacobs lands a left on Ishe Smith

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDENBOY PROMOTIONS

Grady Brewer KO 2 Albert Onolunose
Bongani Mwelase W12 Attila Kovacs
Deandre Latimore 10 Sammy Sparkman
Willie Lee W 10 Alex Bunema
Tshepo Mashego W 10 Karama Nyilawila
Bradley Pryce W 10 Michael Monaghan
Ryan Waters KO 9 Shannon McMahon
Zulfikar Ali KO 9 Joeli Naleca
Ronald Hearns W 8 Patrick Thompson
Saul Roman KO 1 Martin Avila

Welterweights

Isaac Hlatshwayo W 12 Delvin Rodriguez
(Wins Vacant IBF Title)
Jose Luis Castillo KO 3 Christian Solano
Mike Jones W 10 Lenin Arroyo
Joey Hernandez D 10 Ed Paredes
Oyewale Omotos KO 9 Emanuel Augustus
Daniel Sostre KO 6 Frank Houghtaling
Dan Nazareno KO 4 Koji Numata
Mark Melligen KO 4 Ernesto Zepeda
Said El Harrak KO 3 Jesus Vallejo
Saul Alvarez KO 2 Marat Khuzeev

Junior Welterweights

Devon Alexander KO 8 Junior Witter
(Wins Vacant WBC Title)
Juan Diaz W 12 Paul Malignaggi
Timothy Bradley No-Contest 3 Nate Campbell
Jonathan Simamora W 12 Nirwan Rawing
Junior Ali KO 11 Waisale Ratu
Victor Cayo W 10 Julio Diaz
Carlos Parra W 10 Pablo Lugo
Maliki Kinyogoli W 10 Mshihiri Kidila
Cristian Ruiz W 10 Rossemberth Gomez
DeMarcus Corley KO 8 James Kimori
Daudy Bahari KO 8 Somchai Nakbalee
Eusebio Baluarte KO 8 Lotlot Gaviola
William Gonzalez KO 7 Loel Barrantes
Adrian Navarrete KO 5 Joel Ortega

Lightweights

Anthony Peterson W 10 Luis Arceo
Antonio Pitalua KO 6 Jose Reyes
Jason Litzau KO 3 Verquan Kimbrough
Jorge Barrios W 12 Moises Castro
Mlungisi Dlamini W 12 Francisco Lorenzo
Israel Perez W 10 Alberto Santillan
John Jackson W 10 Carlos Hernandez
Juan Inami W 10 Kiyotaka Kanamaru
Joel Cerrud W 9 Eric Castro

Junior Lightweights

Robert Guerrero W 12 Malcolm Klassen
(Wins IBF Title)
Humberto Gutierrez W 12 Sergey Gulyakevich
Daniel Jimenez KO 12 Marcos Jimenez
Patrick Masango W 10 Sfiso Msibi
Humberto Toledo KO 9 Joel Cassiani
Mzonke Fana KO 6 Jasper Seroka
Jesus Muzaka W 12 Rey Labao
Abraham Rodriguez KO 10 Luis Pacheco
David Gomez W 10 Carlos Penalosa
Rafael Urias KO 6 Gilberto Luque
Alejandro Sanabria KO 5 Juan Arellano
Greg Eadie KO 3 Brendan Batty

Featherweights

Steven Luevano W Disq. 7 Bernabe Concepcion
Zohid Hudayberdiev W 10 Farhod Oripov
Daud Yordan KO 10 Ricky Sismundo
Joel Brunker W 10 Ernie Gonzales
Cesar Vazquez KO 5 Carlos Gamez
Heriberto Ruiz KO 3 Cristobal Teran
Gary Russell Jr. KO 1 Jason Jones

Junior Featherweights

Sod Looknongyangtoy D 12 Jack Asis
Eric Barcelona W 10 Rolando Magbanua
Marangin Marbun D 10 Sonny Manakane
Julio Roque Ler KO 8 Marcelo Gomez
Alexis Boureima Kabore W Disq. 3 Foudil Madani
Zsolt Bedak KO 2 Yersin Jailauov

Bantamweights

Bandung Patavikorngym W 12 Alex BS
Klaas Mboyane KO 11 Nkqubela Gwazela
Tabtimdaeng Na Rachawat KO 5 Hari Suharyadi
Mario Macias KO 3 Arturo Camargo
Zolile Mbityi W 8 Sithembile Kibiti

Junior Bantamweights

Nonito Donaire W 12 Rafael Concepcion
Petch Kokietgym Sor Jongcharoen W 12
Jason Egera
Hiroyuki Hisataka KO 7 Ratanadet PorThitima
Nouldy Manakane KO 6 Rif Key Han Ngabalin

Flyweights

Wandee Singwancha W 12 Brix Ray
Juan Montes W 12 Francisco Reyes
Jose Rodriguez W 10 Francisco Soto

Junior Flyweights

Juan Carlos Reveco W 12 Francisco Rosas
Michael Rodriguez W 10 Rogen Flores

Strawweights

Raul Garcia W 12 Sammy Gutierrez
(Retains IBF Title)
Ivan Meneses D 10 Mario Rodriguez
Heri Amol KO 10 Black Ratissa

Roy Jones KO 10 Jeff Lacy

Biloxi, Mississippi: The main event of the "Hook City" pay-per-view card at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum was delayed nearly 30 minutes due to a last-minute dispute over the gloves. "Left Hook" Lacy wanted to wear Everlast mitts, while Jones, who dressed up like a pirate and dubbed himself "Captain Hook" to help sell the show, wanted to wear Grant gloves.

It wound up being the only victory of the night for the fading Lacy. The former super middleweight beltholder wound up eating Everlast leather for 10 rounds before his corner finally stopped it at the end of the 10th. Lacy simply had no answer for the speed and accuracy of Jones, who didn't seem to be bothered by the glove affair. "Just slowed me down 10 minutes, that's all," he said.

Against Lacy, 172, the 40-year-old Jones almost looked like the late-'90s version of himself. Jones, 174, wobbled the 2000 Olympian with a potshot right hand off the jab just a minute into the fight. Lacy, 32, got inside and outworked THE RING's sixth-ranked light heavyweight along the ropes during the final 40 seconds of the round, however, in one of his few bright moments.

Lacy, 25-3 (17), tried to continue making it an inside fight, but most of his shots bounced off the gloves and arms of Jones, 54-5 (40). The aging star gradually began to get the better of the infighting while continuing to score with impressive shots when he got some distance, such as the three straight left hooks he planted in Lacy's face midway through the round.

By the third, Lacy was getting totally outworked inside, while Jones began talking to spectators at ringside. An eight-punch volley from Jones 1:10 into the round opened up a cut above the right eye of the St. Petersburg, Florida, native, and a left uppercut spun Lacy's head 40 seconds before the bell. Lacy went back to Plan A in the fourth, when he returned to the center of the ring and tried lunging his way inside, but the Pensacola, Florida, native wobbled him badly twice with right hands.

With Lacy apparently having no Plan C, Jones continued dominating with his electric jab, potshot rights, and dazzling combos. Lacy managed to score here and there on the inside, but the best he could do was to momentarily shut Jones' mouth.

Both of Lacy's eyes were badly swollen by the end of the seventh, and Jones began to inflict heavy damage. He landed eight unanswered shots a minute into the eighth and staggered Lacy with a five-punch combo off the ropes early in the ninth. With a minute to go in the 10th, Jones appeared to have Lacy ready to go after landing a hard right to the chin, but he chose

Jones had an easy time with Lacy

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

to talk to the ringside cameraman instead of trying to finish it.

After the round, Lacy said he wanted to continue, but his corner saved him from further damage, doing what referee Keith Hughes (USA) should have done by that point. It was the first time Lacy had ever been stopped.

"I don't want nobody holding their heads down for me," said Lacy. "I came here and fought my heart out. I left it all in the ring. Roy Jones was the man tonight. Hopefully, maybe, down the road we can do it again. You can see that I never took a step back. I'm gonna keep doing it."

The judges had Jones ahead 100-90, 99-91 and 98-92 at the time of the stoppage. THE RING had it 99-91 for Jones.

Next up for Jones is a jump to cruiserweight to take on Australia's Danny Green. The bout is tentatively scheduled for November 21. Green, 27-3 (24), was at ringside after stopping Julio Cesar Dominguez on the undercard, and Jones talked to him throughout the main event.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Square Ring Promotions**
(8-15-09)

Roman Gonzalez W 12
Katsunari Takayama

Kobe, Japan: It was an intriguing match that pitted Gonzalez' power against Takayama's elusiveness. Once Gonzalez, 104¼, caught up with the fading speedster in the later rounds, the hometown favorite, Takayama, 105, gave up his original fight plan and fought toe-to-toe, much to the delight of the crowd at World Memorial Hall.

Unfortunately for Takayama, that tactic played into the hands of the Nicaraguan youngster, whose superior power proved to be the difference.

The unbeaten Gonzalez, 24-0 (20), continually stalked the fast moving, two-time former beltholder Takayama, 23-4 (9), in pounding out a unanimous decision to retain the

Gonzalez digs a left to Takayama's body

PHOTO BY STR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

THE RING Fighter of the Month

Elio Rojas

Venturing to Japan to meet a reigning titleholder on his home turf is a task that has intimidated many challengers, but not Elio Rojas. The Brooklyn-based Dominican had overcome scarier obstacles.

Rojas survived abject poverty as a child. He fought on after the death of father/trainer Elio Ramon in 1998 and following the death of amateur coach Rudy Zapata in 2003. He's persisted after having his Olympic dreams derailed due to the use of a banned diuretic, after a controversial points loss to Gamaliel Diaz in 2007, and after being limited to just four fights in the last 2½ years due to neglectful promoting by Don King.

Therefore, when his big opportunity came, Rojas didn't hesitate. He traveled to Tokyo, where he won a unanimous 12-round decision over Takahiro Aoh to win the WBC featherweight belt by scores of 118-110, 117-111, and 116-113.

Rojas might have had to take a long trip overseas to get his first crack at a title, but it was nothing compared to the dramatic journey that led to that flight. Now we'll get to see just how far the 26-year-old can go.

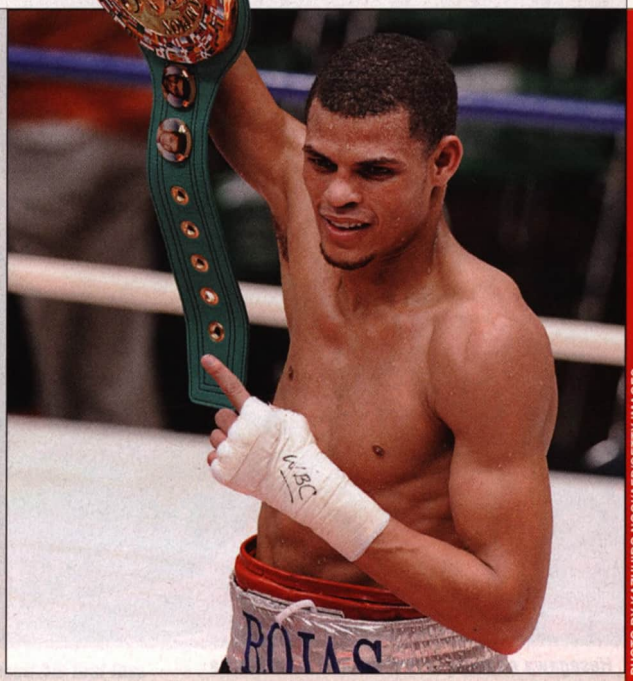


PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

strawweight belt and his number-one ranking by THE RING. It was the second defense of the WBA strap for the 22-year-old Gonzalez, a native of Managua.

The fast-moving Takayama, 26, looked good in the opening round. He used his footwork, circling like a ballet dancer to have Gonzalez missing, while mixing in pit-a-pat punches to his opponent. However, the titleholder kept the pressure on his quicker opponent, occasionally landing long right uppercuts and roundhouse left hooks as he appeared to take the next two sessions by a slight margin.

Gonzalez accelerated his attack and kept punching the elusive challenger, heedless of precision, to clearly win the fourth. But Takayama, who previously held the WBA and WBC belts in separate reigns, showed his gameness and gallantry in fighting back to take the fifth with busier, albeit lighter, hands.

The fight clearly turned in the sixth, when Gonzalez opened a laceration over the left eyebrow of Takayama with a solid straight right. The titlist clearly dominated the second half of the fight, but Takayama's retaliation was sometimes furious and fierce enough to surprise Gonzalez.

The eighth saw Gonzalez pick up the pace in an attempt to finish the affair, but Takayama narrowly escaped by occasionally grabbing. Takayama came back fighting in the ninth, which proved to be the most exciting round of the fight. The challenger started by trading with the hard-hitting Gonzalez, who temporarily covered up, and then exploded with more effective punches to the face before the bell came to the Japanese fighter's rescue.

Takayama continued mixing it up in the center of the ring. Gonzalez, however, dominated the pace the rest of the way with sharp combinations that sometimes knocked Takayama's head back.

Levi Martinez (USA), Sergio Caiz (USA) and Pinit Prayadsab (Thailand) each had identical tallies of 118-110 for Gonzalez. It looked to be a tighter contest, but Gonzalez pulled out many close, competitive rounds. The referee was Silvestre Abainza (Philippines).

Gonzalez praised Takayama's gameness, saying, "Takayama was a talented fighter with speed and heart. It was a tough fight. I dedicate this victory to my idol, Alexis Arguello." Gonzalez received lessons from Arguello as a youngster.

Gracious in defeat, Takayama praised Gonzalez' strength. "Gonzalez was strong," he said. "My good punches sometimes caught him and my bodyshots might have had him slowing down a bit. But his punches became stronger and more effective as the bout progressed. It showed he's a good champ."

With the loss, Takayama fell from number six to number 10 in THE RING ratings.

Gonzalez admitted afterward that he had problems making weight and said he would like to move up to the 108-pound category in the near future. Until then, Arguello's pupil will have to fight the scale as well as forthcoming challengers.

Promoter: **Shinsei Promotions**

(7-14-09)

Joe Koizumi

Hozumi Hasegawa KO 1 Nestor Rocha

Kobe, Japan: Hasegawa had expected a tough fight from Rocha, who is known for his durability and strong heart. However, the Montebello, California, native's opening-round jitters proved to be detrimental against the sharpness of THE RING'S top-rated bantamweight.

The fast-punching Hasegawa, 117½, kept the belt in impressive fashion as he quickly dropped Rocha, 117½, with a vicious southpaw right hook, then sent him to the deck again with a barrage of punches before referee Gary Ritter (USA) wisely called a well-received halt at 2:28 of the opening round at World Memorial Hall. For Hasegawa, 27-2 (11), it was his ninth defense of the WBC belt he won in April 2005.

Hasegawa, a 28-year-old resident of Kobe, slammed the 26-year-old Rocha, 21-2 (7), with combinations at the outset, then threw a southpaw left followed by a picture-perfect right hook that landed on the button and sent Rocha down. He just managed to regain his feet on wobbly legs inside of the count, but Hasegawa quickly swarmed over the fading challenger and floored him again with a fusillade of

PHOTO BY SANKEI/GETTY IMAGES

Hasegawa en route to first-round TKO of Rocha

punches. Rocha gamely beat the count, but then staggered badly, convincing Ritter to terminate the affair.

The 148-second demolition was the fourth consecutive win within two rounds for a fighter previously regarded as a soft-punching speedster. "Sorry I couldn't give everyone a longer fight," Hasegawa said, "but my punches were effective enough to score a quick finish."

The crestfallen Rocha said: "Sorry I wasn't able to show a better performance, but the champ was too fast and strong. I'll be back."

Promoter: **Shinsei Promotions**
(7-14-09)
Joe Koizumi

Miguel Vazquez W 10 Breidis Prescott

Las Vegas, Nevada: Prescott might have found the limelight with a one-round destruction of Amir Khan last year in England, but the previously undefeated Colombian "Khanqueror" lost it in 10 to the underdog Vazquez in their lightweight clash at Planet Hollywood.

Taking the fight on two-weeks notice, the native of Guadalajara, Mexico, who goes by the nickname of "Titere" (Puppet), proved anything but stiff in weathering a first-round knockdown and dozens of chopping right hands in posting a well-earned split-decision victory against Prescott, 137, Miami, Florida, by way of Barranquilla, Colombia.

When he was dropped by a jab in the first round, it looked as if Vazquez, 136, had been the correct choice for an easy win. The knockdown and a half-dozen chopping right hands during the first two heats, many of which landed on the back of Vazquez' head, had it looking like an early night.

The third round was a better one for the 22-year-old Mexican, though the 26-year-old Prescott's sloppy rights continued to land all over Vazquez' anatomy, from his thigh to hip, neck, and skull.

But Vazquez, 25-3 (12), refused to back down. He had his jab in play by the end of the third. By the fourth, Vazquez added a crisp, straight right and, proving a superior infighter, had Prescott, 21-1 (18), missing more shots than he was landing. One round later, Vazquez was driving Prescott back, landing sharp rights. Near the end of the round, a big overhand right sealed the round for the Mexican.

Prescott turned up the heat in the sixth, but Vazquez' jab and one-two edged out the Colombian's raw assault. The seventh saw the best exchanges yet, but, once again, Vazquez retained control. After outboxing Prescott in the pocket throughout the eighth, it was anyone's fight going into the final two rounds.

A big right uppercut and continued straight rights had Vazquez edging a now-desperate Prescott in the ninth. The Colombian came on strong in the 10th with more clubbing rights, but Vazquez battled back with sharper, cleaner shots.

The three Nevada judges were split. Dave Moretti somehow saw Prescott ahead, 97-92, while Duane Ford and Jerry Roth tallied it for Vazquez, 96-93 and 95-94, respectively. The referee was Joe Cortez (USA).

Prescott, who was ranked number seven by THE RING, dropped out of the top 10 with the loss, while Vazquez entered the ratings in the seventh spot.

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Roy Englebrecht Events**
(7-17-09)
Chris Cozzone

Antonio Escalante W 10 Cornelius Lock

El Paso, Texas: Returning to his hometown, El Paso's Antonio Escalante set up a possible title shot by pitching a near-shutout to Cornelius Lock, Detroit, Michigan, at the Don Haskins Center.

After two years without a significant card, 4,200 rowdy fans turned out to watch their man come close to a knockout win. Despite landing multiple punches and having his man on the deck twice, there was no easy or safe combination to unlock Lock, who proved game to the core throughout.

Escalante's quicker hands and relentless aggression forced southpaw Lock, 122¼, to the ropes in the opening stanzas. Though beating his man to the punch, a short right hook from Lock in the second opened up a small cut below Escalante's right eye.

In the third round, the 24-year-old Escalante, 124, bombed Lock with a bodyshot that dropped him to the canvas. Lock beat the count, but Escalante unleashed a barrage that floored his foe again near the end of the round. This time, the bell saved him.

In the fourth and fifth, Lock survived, pursued by the faster, pressuring Escalante, who, though hurting his man, could not finish him. Forced into a defensive fight, the

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Vazquez (right) hands Prescott his first loss

Lock absorbs a left hook from Escalante

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

30-year-old Lock, 18-4 (11), appeared tired in the fifth, but had his moments in the sixth, landing counterpunches on the aggressive Escalante, 21-2 (13). Increased pressure and hooks to the body by the chasing Escalante made it another easy round to score.

After eating a few right hooks in the seventh, Escalante poured it on, landing lead rights. Both fighters took a break in the eighth, but Escalante stepped it up in the final minute, punishing Lock against the ropes.

Hungry for a knockout, Escalante stalked Lock, but the jabbing and moving southpaw, no longer fighting to win, looked like he was cruising to lose a decision on his feet rather than go down via kayo. Circling around the ring, Lock kept away from Escalante's big shots, forcing his frustrated opponent to chase him down.

At the end of 10, two judges, Raul Valencia (USA) and Sam Garza (USA), scored it a shutout for Escalante at 100-88, while the third, Levi Martinez (USA), had it 98-90. It was Escalante's seventh straight win. The referee was Rocky Burke (USA).

"I knew I could hurt him in the third," Escalante said. "I was thinking I had him, but my corner told me to settle down and box. We all knew he was dangerous in every round, right up to the last. Still, I tried for a knockout. I came so close, but he didn't want to fall down. He was tough."

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(7-24-09)
Chris Cozzone

Miguel Acosta KO 9 Urbano Antillon

Nueva Vallarta, Mexico: The unbeaten prospects keep falling. In a year that has seen the likes of Victor Ortiz, Alfredo Angulo, Alexander Dimitrenko, and John Duddy all suffer their first defeats, lightweight Antillon joined the list when underdog Acosta leveled him with a sensational right uppercut in the ninth round. It had been a close fight to that point, but with one punch, the RING-rated Antillon was forced into rebuilding mode.

The Antillon-Acosta fight at the Grand Mayan was supposed to be an undercard bout on Top Rank's "Latin Fury 10" pay-per-view, but when separate fights involving Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. and Yuriorkis Gamboa fell through, the 26-year-old Antillon became the featured fighter on the show. Unfortunately for him, the little-known Acosta, 31, wasn't interested in making this a showcase for his opponent. Coming in on a 16-fight winning streak, mostly against nondescript opposition in his native Venezuela, the tricky Acosta used his legs to frustrate Antillon all night before firing the sudden uppercut that brought him the most significant victory of his career.

Right from the opening bell, Acosta, 133, Miranda, Venezuela, was bouncing on his toes and using every inch of the ring. In the second round, Antillon, 135, Maywood, California, via Chihuahua, Mexico, cornered Acosta and seemed ready to unload the sort of heavy punches that had kayoed 19 of his first 26 opponents, but the slick Venezuelan slipped everything and escaped undamaged. Later in the round, Antillon did score with a clean left hook, knocking Acosta

off-balance, though it appeared the stumble was more the result of tripping over something on the ring apron than being damaged by the punch.

The action heated up in the fourth, when Antillon came out of his corner and landed a hard, straight right to the body, causing Acosta to hold for a moment. But the South American quickly came back with two looping left hands and a sweet right uppercut. In the corner after the round, Antillon's trainer told him, "I think we're falling behind on points."

It was close, though, and remained so through the middle rounds. The seventh was a good round for Acosta, who landed a nice right to the chin and later watched referee Russell Mora (USA) warn his opponent for a low blow. The roles were reversed in the eighth, when it was Acosta who was warned by Mora—for excessive holding—and Antillon who was landing better punches. The unbeaten Mexican-American pursued Acosta aggressively, while the Venezuelan seemed to be fading and losing his legs. After the bell rang, Antillon got in Acosta's face, seemingly trying to goad him into running less and trading more the next round.

The tactic didn't work, as Acosta kept moving to start the ninth, thinking mostly about defense. He really only shifted to offense when Antillon got wild and left himself open to counters, which he did frequently in round nine. Acosta countered him silly for a brief stretch in the middle of the round, and the finish came thanks to a counterpunch. Antillon had his foe trapped in a corner and lunged in with a left hook, but before it could reach its intended destination, Acosta, 26-3-2 (20), drilled him with a perfect right uppercut. Antillon, 26-1 (19), collapsed forward in to the ropes, and just barely got up at the count of nine. Mora took a quick look, felt Antillon was too unsteady to go on, and waved off the fight at the 1:47 mark.

The bout was for the vacant WBA "interim" lightweight belt, whatever that means. Pointless trinket or not, the quality win over Antillon earned Acosta a spot in THE RING's rankings at number 10.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(7-25-09)

Giovanni Segura KO 6 Juanito Rubillar

Nuevo Vallarta, Mexico: On Top Rank's "Latin Fury 10" pay-per-view undercard, Segura was supposed to meet Sonny Boy Jaro in the first defense of the junior flyweight belt that he took from Cesar Canchila in their March rematch. Jaro couldn't obtain a visa in time, however, so Top Rank reached out to another Filipino contender to save the bout.

Rubillar, a 32-year-old southpaw out of Parañaque City, Philippines, took the bout on 48-hours notice. He reached Nuevo Vallarta in time for the weigh-in, where it took him two tries to make the 108 limit for his sixth stab at a title belt.

Segura made sure it wasn't worth the trouble. It took the 27-year-old slugger two rounds to adjust, but Segura, 108, was dominating the fight by the third. At the 2:04 mark of the sixth, the corner of Rubillar, 108, opted to toss in the towel and save their man further punishment.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Acosta attacks Antillon en route to upset

The free-swinging Segura, a Bell Gardens, California, resident by way of Ciudad Altamirano, Mexico, spent the first round loading up with bombs to the body and head, but Rubillar, 46-13-7 (22), slickly avoided punishment and caught Segura with enough counters to eke out the round. In the second, the heavier-handed Segura, 21-1-1 (17), finished by landing a solid right hook to the jaw at the bell.

That shot was a portent of things to come as the momentum swung heavily in Segura's favor in the third, when he began finding his range and punishing Rubillar to the head and body. As Segura swarmed midway through round, he appeared to score a knockdown with right hook to ribcage that caused Rubillar's left glove to touch the floor, but referee Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico) apparently missed it.

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Rojas made good use of lead rights to take title from Aoh

Segura's attack continued in the fourth and fifth. Rubillar, who never quit fighting back, landed some decent counter shots. None of them appeared to bother Segura, however.

Rubillar switched tactics at the start of the sixth, opting to try to stand his ground and outwork Segura at close range. He stepped back and landed a solid one-two down the pipe that slowed down the Segura buzz saw momentarily, but Segura immediately came forward and connected with a right hook to the head that had Rubillar suddenly circling away.

Backed into a corner, Rubillar got Segura to run into a right to the jaw that spun the beltholder's head. But Segura never stopped punching, and a few more shots to the head of Rubillar prompted the veteran's corner to stop it, despite Rubillar standing seemingly alert and unhurt.

Segura was in complete command at the time of the stoppage, however, and it was difficult to imagine Rubillar mounting any kind of a rally against THE RING's third-ranked junior flyweight. It was the third-straight loss for Rubillar, who slipped to number 10 in THE RING rankings.

Television: **Pay-per-view**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(7-25-09)

Elio Rojas W 12 Takahiro Aoh

Tokyo, Japan: In returning to his native city to make his first defense of the featherweight belt he won in March, Aoh might have given too much respect to the highly regarded Rojas by foregoing his usual aggressiveness.

Aoh's reluctance cost him as Brooklyn-based Dominican challenger Rojas, 124½, captured the WBC belt via unanimous decision against the southpaw Aoh, 126, at Korakuen Hall.

The slick-punching Rojas, whose amateur mark was reportedly an outstanding 205-3, got off to a good start as he connected with light but busy combinations. The WBC's open scoring system, which is permitted in Japan, showed Rojas leading 39-37 (twice) and 40-36 after four rounds.

The 26-year-old Rojas, 21-1 (13), maintained the initiative by connecting with lead rights to the southpaw titlist, who had dethroned Mexican veteran Oscar Larios by a unanimous verdict in their March rematch. The seventh saw Aoh unleash good combinations that stunned Rojas, but Rojas cleverly grabbed Aoh to keep him from accelerating his retaliation. The official tallies announced after the eighth were: 78-75, 78-74, and 79-73, all in favor of Rojas.

The 25-year-old Aoh, 17-2-1 (8), who had acquired six national high school championships here prior to his entry into the paid ranks, showed his best in round nine, when he connected with a vicious southpaw right hook that momentarily stunned the skillful challenger. Aware that he was behind on points, Aoh attempted to surge in the final three rounds, but Rojas caught him with more accurate shots while continuing to control the pace.

Duane Ford (USA) scored it 118-110, Anek Hongtongkam (Thailand) saw it 117-111, and Gelasio Perez Huerta (Mexico) had it 116-113, all for Rojas, who moved into the number-nine position in THE RING featherweight ratings. The loss dropped Aoh, who entered at number nine, out of the top 10.

The referee was Laurence Cole (USA).

Promoter: **Teiken Promotions**
(7-14-09)
Joe Koizumi

Paulus Moses W 12 Takehiro Shimada

Windhoek, Namibia: Outside of his native country, Moses' name tends to come up most frequently when someone is ridiculing boxing's ludicrous sanctioning bodies. The 31-year-old Moses is one of three lightweight so-called "champions" recognized by the WBA, which also dubs Juan Manuel Marquez its "super champion" and Miguel Acosta its "interim champion."

But the depths to which the alphabet organizations will stoop to extort a sanctioning fee are no fault of Moses, who is quietly growing into an outstanding 135-pounder. In the first defense of his "regular" belt, THE RING'S ninth-ranked lightweight thoroughly dominated challenger Shimada, Tokyo, Japan, over 12 rounds in a homecoming bout before a sellout crowd of 3,000 supporters at the Windhoek Country Club.

The 37-year-old Shimada, 134, struggled throughout the bout with an injury to his left leg, which appeared to occur in the first round when he slipped to the floor after eluding a right hook from Moses, 134½. Shimada, 23-5-1 (16), later said he tweaked his hamstring in the second round, and he used the injury as justification for a rematch.

It's unlikely to happen, given the ease with which Moses, 25-0 (17), overwhelmed the Tokyo resident. After taking two rounds to adjust, the taller "Hitman" found his range and began to control the action with his quick jab and overall work rate, while mixing in solid power shots downstairs.

The game Shimada, who pushed forward throughout, was rocked by a left hook in the sixth round. Shimada had some positive moments in the 10th, when he scored with some shots after catching Moses, Windhoek, Namibia, against the ropes, but Moses cruised through the 11th and 12th, keeping a desperate Shimada at bay with the jab.

Terry O'Connor (England) had it 119-109, Jose Ignacio Martinez (Spain) saw it 119-108, and Philippe Verbeke (Belgium) scored it 118-110, all for Moses. The referee was Lahcen Oumghar (Netherlands).

It was the second shot at a belt for Shimada, a 5-to-1 underdog who was stopped in seven by Edwin Valero in June 2008. For Moses, who traveled to Japan to decision Yusuke Kobori in May for the trinket, promoter Don King could bring him to the U.S. for a fight this fall. "Shimada is a clever boxer with good technique," Moses told Reuters. "He was harder than Kobori and I was wary of his counter-punching."

Promoter: **Nestor Tobias**

(7-25-09)

Campbell claimed he couldn't see through the blood

PHOTO BY BRYAN CROWE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Timothy Bradley No-Contest 3
Nate Campbell

Rancho Mirage, California: Campbell, 138½, of Jacksonville, Florida, protested long and loud after his bout with THE RING'S top-ranked junior welterweight was stopped and awarded to Bradley as a third-round TKO. Campbell's beef with the verdict stemmed from referee David Mendoza (USA), who ruled that a cut on Campbell's eyebrow had been inflicted by a punch, rather than an accidental headbutt. Under California rules, a headbutt stoppage prior to four rounds would've resulted in a no-contest. Videotaped replays showed a butt, but Mendoza's ruling stuck.

Bradley, 139, Palm Springs, California, seemed a bit disheartened by the controversial verdict. "I was just doing my job in there," he said. "He was getting older as the bout was continuing. It was just a matter of time."

The 37-year-old Campbell, a former lightweight titlist, wasn't very effective during rounds one and two, while the 25-year-old Bradley, performing for a home state crowd, used good footwork and sporadic combinations to control the fight. Bradley, 24-0 (12), looked on his way to a routine victory.

But midway through round three, there was a nasty head collision. There'd already been a few incidents of accidental butting, but this was the worst. Campbell, 33-5-1 (25), now bloody, stepped back to grouse to Mendoza, but Bradley went on the offensive, cornering Campbell and scoring with a flurry of punches. Most of Bradley's assault was of the pitter-pat variety, but he managed to mix a few heavy shots in with the fluff. When Campbell returned to his corner between rounds and complained to ringside doctor Howard Baer that he couldn't see, the bout was immediately stopped. With the exception of Campbell and his promoter, Don King, few of the 2,380 assembled at the Agua Caliente Casino felt a gross injustice had taken place.

Bradley, making the first successful defense of the WBO 140-pound belt, does have a large, baldhead, and he is pretty handy with it. With Campbell trundling forward to wage an inside battle, it was inevitable that their noggins would bump. Campbell has been accused of trying to sneak out of the fight on a technicality, but his claims of blurred vision are probably legitimate.

"Cuts heal," Campbell said. "Blindness doesn't."

Three weeks after the fight, the California State Athletic Commission overturned the original result, changing it from a TKO victory for Bradley to a no-contest. The CSAC recognized after watching a video of the fight that an accidental head butt was the cause of a cut over Campbell's

left eye in the third round, not a punch, as was originally ruled by referee Mendoza.

Promoter: **Gary Shaw Productions**
Television: **Showtime**
(8-1-09)

Devon Alexander KO 8 Junior Witter

Rancho Mirage, California: Alexander had very little trouble with Witter, earning a strange eighth round stoppage at Agua Caliente Casino on the Bradley-Campbell card. Southpaw Alexander used a simple strategy of keeping his distance and shooting right hooks at Witter, many of which landed cleanly on the Brit's exposed chin. Alexander knocked Witter off balance at least thrice during the early rounds, partly because Witter never quite found his footing.

Witter, 139, Sheffield, England, seemed confused from the opening bell, and at one point tumbled wildly to the canvas after missing with a haymaker. Alexander, 138½, St. Louis, Missouri, worked calmly, piling up points from a safe distance. Even when Witter resorted to mauling and clinching, Alexander remained poised. Gradually, Alexander's blows began landing with more authority, and by the eighth, Witter seemed dangerously close to falling, having to throw his arms around Alexander's waist to keep from going down.

Witter, 37-3-2 (22), opted to quit on his stool after the eighth, telling referee Lou Moret (USA) that he'd had enough. Witter later explained that he'd suffered a hairline fracture to his left hand six months earlier.

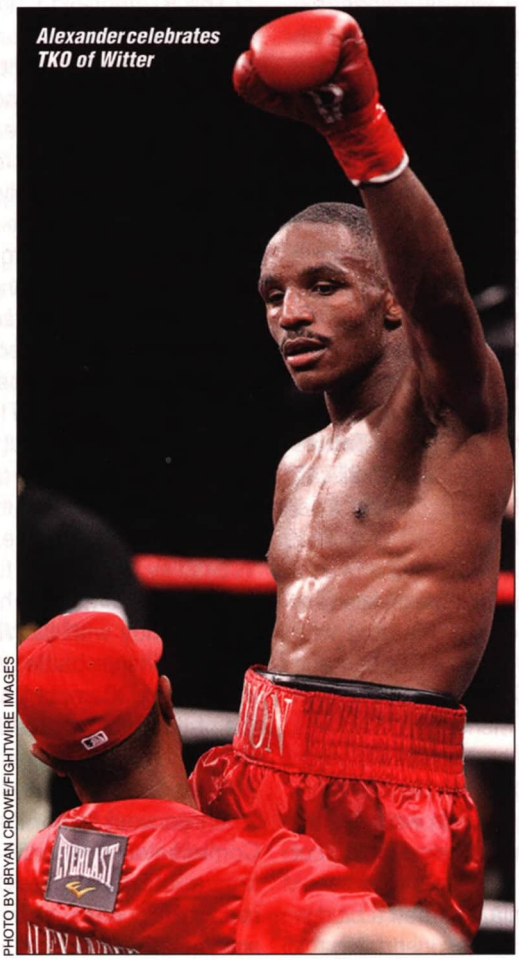
"It felt like I re-injured it in the fourth round, so I tried to switch up," said Witter, who fought Alexander from both a southpaw and orthodox stance. As he sat looking dejected between rounds eight and nine, Moret warned him about his holding tactics. That was when Witter resigned for the evening. He rose from his stool and sauntered over to Alexander's corner to congratulate the surprised winner. Witter is 35 and has lost two of his last three bouts.

Alexander, 22, was an outstanding amateur, posting a 300-10 record only to fall short at the 2004 U.S. Olympic Trials. With the win against Witter, Alexander raised his professional record to 19-0 (12) and won the vacant WBC junior welterweight belt. He was well ahead on the scorecards at the time of the stoppage.

"I saw something special in Devon from the beginning," promoter Don King said prior to the fight. "He doesn't drink, smoke, or take drugs. He takes care of his body. His smile lights up a room. He's also a great role model for young people. I can't say enough good things about this talented young man."

Alexander now wears a belt that once belonged to Timothy Bradley, who was stripped in April for refusing to meet the WBC's deadline to face Alexander. A bout between the two would be intriguing.

Promoter: **Gary Shaw Productions**
Television: **Showtime**
(8-1-09)



Alexander celebrates TKO of Witter

PHOTO BY BRYAN CROWE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Isaac Hlatshwayo W 12 Delvin Rodriguez

Uncasville, Connecticut: When these two first met last November in South Africa, a narrow verdict for Hlatshwayo was changed to a draw a few hours later due to a misread scorecard. Rodriguez promoter Joe DeGuardia won the purse bid for their rematch, which was for a welterweight belt left vacant after the IBF stripped Joshua Clottey for having the audacity for fight Miguel Cotto. DeGuardia's successful bid meant the return bout would be fought on Rodriguez' turf.

That didn't faze Hlatshwayo, who ventured to the Mohegan Sun and ruined Rodriguez' prefight knockout prediction by capturing a split decision in another fast-paced fight.

Judge Glenn Feldman (USA) had Rodriguez winning 115-113, but he was overruled by Isaac Tshabalala (South Africa) and Tony Paolilo (USA), who had it 116-113 and 116-112, respectively, for Hlatshwayo. THE RING scored it 115-113 for Hlatshwayo.

After a feeling-out opening three minutes, the 6'0" Rodriguez, 147¼, outworked the 5'7" Hlatshwayo, 146¼, over the next three rounds. Boxing from a safe distance, Rodriguez continually timed Hlatshwayo as he tried to work his way inside. When the two got close, Rodriguez blasted Hlatshwayo with several sharp uppercuts, leaving him with a bloodied lip. A big right hand from Rodriguez left Hlatshwayo momentarily stunned in the second.

After the early rounds, Rodriguez, 24-3-2 (14) began venturing inside, where Hlatshwayo, 29-1-1 (10), was much more effective. The Dominican-born Danbury, Connecticut, resident also relied increasingly on his left hand, the probable result of a right-hand injury. Meanwhile, the native of Soweto, South Africa, found his composure and began to outwork Rodriguez.

Hlatshwayo used an effective right hand at close range and a smooth jab

on the outside to pile up points in the second half of the fight. He often tied up Rodriguez on the inside and landed as referee Steve Smoger (USA) allowed the two to punch their way out. Hlatshwayo's best shot of night came in seventh, when he sent Rodriguez stumbling with a hard right.

Rodriguez' pace gradually slowed throughout the later rounds, while Hlatshwayo's picked up. In the 11th, Rodriguez did bizarre 360-degree spin after missing with wild left hook. Rodriguez then coasted through 12th after being told by his corner that he was ahead. Hlatshwayo, 31, dominated the final round, landing several rights as Rodriguez, 29, fought in reverse.

Hlatshwayo, who dedicated the win to Nelson Mandela, had a badly swollen left eye afterwards. "The fight was very tough," he told the *Cape Times* after returning to South Africa. "As you can see, my eye is closed and I'm sore. He came out fighting and smoking, and was throwing bombs from the first round. I was behind on points after the first three rounds, but I knew I would win if I kept my composure and kept boxing from the fourth round until the 12th."

Promoter Lou DiBella, who began talks for a unification bout with his fighter, Andre Berto, a few days later, attended the bout.

Promoter: Star Boxing
(8-1-09)

Mike Jones W 10 Lenin Arroyo

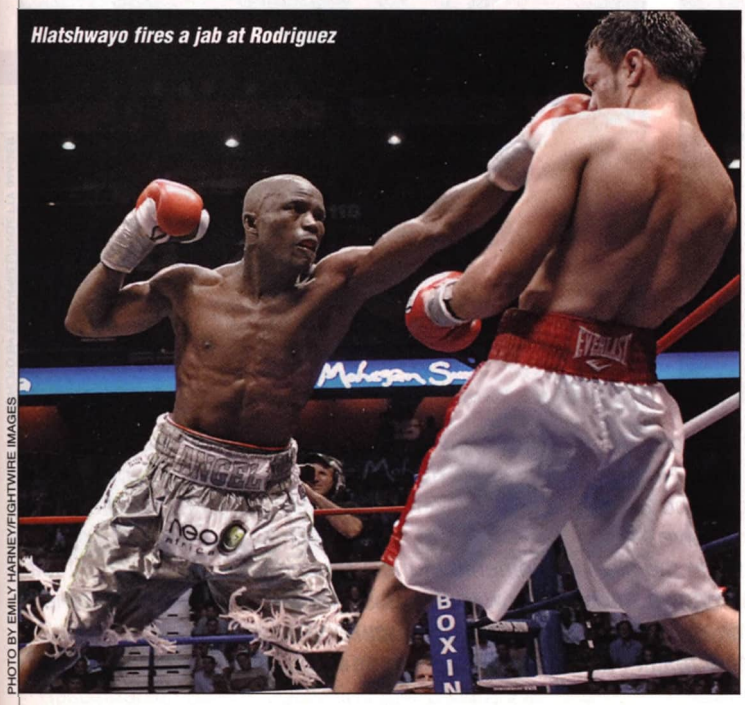
Atlantic City, New Jersey: The jury is neither in nor out on touted welterweight prospect Jones after a commanding yet not entirely satisfactory victory against Arroyo. The verdict was more like a hung jury. Jones, 146, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, pounded—and the operative word is *pounded*—out a unanimous decision over a game but overmatched Arroyo, 144½, Miami, Florida, via San Jose, Costa Rica, in a lively and entertaining bout fought in front of a near-sellout crowd at Bally's Casino.

Despite weight parity, the underdog looked a division smaller, and the lanky Jones presented a Promethean physical challenge. The 29-year-old Arroyo, 20-10-1 (4), the second sub from the oft-postponed Jones-Larry Mosley match, didn't have a clue on how to solve Jones, except to advance relentlessly through withering fire and throw. For the first few rounds, this made a star of Jones, 18-0 (15). But by the fifth, it was getting time to close the show. Jones, 26, brought out the heavy artillery, landed with impunity in torrid action, but couldn't seem to faze his opponent, who has yet to be stopped as a pro.

Undaunted, Jones came back with a redoubled effort in the sixth, but his frustration was beginning to show as he mixed in some exaggerated wind-up punches. Even that didn't generate enough pop to stop the game and gutsy Arroyo.

Philly fans are notoriously tough and critical. Jones was being held to a high standard, and his fan base was becoming disillusioned. He started the seventh at southpaw, trying to find the extra power to crack the nutshell, as vocal support for Arroyo mounted. Though one-sided, the contest was producing torrid action, and excitement was rising as the crowd divided its loyalties. Cynics began to taunt the favorite while die-hards became strident in their entreaties for a kayo. When the portside action produced nothing new, stances reverted to orthodox, and Jones relaxed just a bit in the eighth before pouring on a rally to the bell.

In the final two, Arroyo got the living daylights beat out of him but would not yield. When he landed sporadic shots, the crowd overreacted. When Arroyo managed to cut down the distance, Jones was effective with short punches despite his long reach, and Arroyo gained little. Late in the ninth, Jones landed his best shot, a right uppercut, and jarred Arroyo, but the Costa Rican shook it off and fought back under fire. The 10th was an Armageddon, with Jones' fans imploring him to score the knockout while the Arroyo crowd anxiously hoped for the final bell. The Arroyo crowd won. Jones was pouring it on in the final minute, and while Arroyo was jolted, he never showed real signs of going down. Both fighters offered the usual litany of injuries to explain their performances.



Hlatshwayo fires a jab at Rodriguez

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

The decision was foregone, yet controversial. Lynne Carter (USA) had it 98-92, while Debra Barnes (USA) and George Hill (USA) each scored it 99-91, seemingly rewarding Arroya for some rounds where he wasn't beaten as badly as in others. In fact, some of the rounds were so one-sided, the judges would have been justified in scoring them 10-8, and in a less charged atmosphere, referee Benjy Estevez Jr. (USA) might have stopped the bout.

Promoter: **Peltz Boxing Promotions**
(8-8-09)

J. R. Jowett ■

IBF Super Middleweight Title

Lucian Bute

Main Event 12 Rounds

Librado Andrade

PHOTO BY HERBIE WHYNE/SPORTZFRAME

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Hopefully, referee Marlon Wright will be watching someplace far, far away when Librado Andrade and IBF super middleweight titlist Lucian Bute tangle again, on November 28, at the Bell Centre in Montreal, Quebec.

For those who do not recall, it was Wright who flubbed a knockdown in the 12th round of the first Bute-Andrade fight, in October 2008, that led to an inconclusive ending—at least in the minds of most fight fans.

When a nearly exhausted Bute was knocked down in the closing moments of the 12th and final round, Wright felt compelled to stop the count midway through and admonish Andrade for wandering too far out of the neutral corner. The delay gave the dazed Bute extra time to recover and the final bell saved him from any additional punishment.

Hopefully, this time there will be a more conclusive result in front of what promises to be another raucous crowd packing the Bell Centre.

Lucian Bute

Librado Andrade

Record and World Rating

Bute slams a left into Zuniga

PHOTO BY HERBIE WHYNE/SPORTZFRAME

Andrade has Bute in trouble

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Is 24-0 with 19 knockouts ... Was member of the Romanian national team ... Won bronze medal at the 1999 World Amateur Championships ... Followed with another gold medal, dominating performance at 2001 Francophone Games in Ottawa, Canada ... Turned pro at 23 in November 2003 ... Stopped first 15 opponents ... Won vacant minor light heavyweight vacant belt in February '05 ... Won minor super middleweight belt in March '05 ... Won two more minor 168-pound belts in September '06 ... Won IBF super middleweight title in October '07 ... Successfully defended IBF belt three times ... Ranked second at super middleweight by THE RING.

Is 28-2 with 21 knockouts ... Grew up admiring Mexican legend Julio Cesar Chavez ... Began boxing at nine and fought until he was 13, before taking break to focus on school ... Had undistinguished amateur career, losing more fights than he won ... Turned pro at 20 and made debut August '99 with a four-round unanimous victory ... Scored stoppages in seven of his next eight bouts ... Won minor belt in June '04 ... Lost bid to win WBC/WBA super middleweight titles in March '07 ... Won another minor belt in October '07 ... Lost controversial decision in October '08 for IBF super middleweight belt ... Ranked fourth at super middleweight by THE RING.

Age and Physical Equipment

Andrade and Bute trade bombs

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Andrade sends Mack to the canvas

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Is 29 years old ... Stands 6'2" with 70-inch reach ... Southpaw ... Slender but muscular frame ... Fast hands and feet ... Doesn't cut easily ... Dubious chin ... Respectable power ... Questionable endurance.

Is 30 years old ... Stands 6'2" with 78-inch reach ... Sturdy jaw ... Tall and lanky ... Career 168-pounder, though fought a few times at light heavyweight ... Modest hand and foot speed ... Conditioned to fight at rugged pace ... Good power ... Prone to swell ... Long arms.

Lucian Bute

Librado Andrade

Best Weapons

Bute punishes overmatched Hughes

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Stieglitz covers up against Andrade's onslaught

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Strong willed ... Fast, precise southpaw jab ... Straight left carries respectable power ... Short left uppercut can also do damage ... Combination punching ... Works straight left well off the jab ... Possesses the versatility to press action or box from safe distance.

Tenacity, heart, desire ... Hammered by Mikkel Kessler and kept coming forward ... Outstanding bodypuncher ... Straight right and short left uppercut most potent punches ... Volume attack has led to most of stoppage victories ... Solid finisher ... Respectable jab.

Previous Fight

Left no doubts in first bout after controversial victory over Andrade by vanquishing Fulgencio Zuniga in four rounds in March '09 ... Took control at the outset with the jab ... Zuniga caught most of everything, until a lead left cleaved his defenses in the second ... Left uppercut in third had Zuniga retreating ... After finding range, pounded Zuniga in fourth ... Right hook dropped Zuniga first time in fourth ... Trapped and hurt in the corner, Zuniga was finished with a series of lefts at the 2:25 mark.

Making first appearance in April 2009 since losing the disputed decision to Bute, easily handling Vitali Tsypko ... Snapped Tsypko's three-fight winning streak ... Controlled most of the exchanges after slow opening round ... Knocked down Tsypko with a right to the jaw in the second ... Wobbled Tsypko in the third with right ... Scored second knockdown in the seventh with another right ... Survived cut over left eye in the 11th caused by unintentional butt for unanimous decision victory by scores of 120-106 and 117-109 (twice).

Quality of Opposition

Carefully cultivated by Interbox ... Opposition not exactly a who's who among the elite super middleweights ... Only real standout names are Andrade (W 12) and Sakio Bika (W 12) ... Fight resume filled with fringe contenders Fulgencio Zuniga (KO 4), Kabary Salem (KO 8) ... Stopped past-their-primes veterans William Joppy (KO 10) and Dingaan Thobela (KO 4) ... Defeated Alejandro Berrio (KO 11) to win IBF super middleweight belt in October 2007 ... Has not fought outside of Quebec since '05.

Has taken on some of the best 168-pounders in the world ... Only defeats came against the top-two rated super middleweights, Kessler and Bute ... Was dominated by Kessler (L 12) for the WBA and WBC super middleweight titles in March 2007 ... Lost controversial decision to Bute (L 12) for the IBF supper middle title in October 2008 ... Decisioned once-rated Tsypko (W 12) in April '09 to set up Bute rematch... Recovered from first-round knockdown to stop Yusaf Mack (KO 7) in October '07 ... Stopped veteran Otis Grant (KO 7) in April '06.

Defense

Employs foot speed ... Ability to retreat to elude punches and still be effective offensively ... Tendency to hold hands low ... Quite good at darting away from on-coming opponent ... Uses lateral movement to dodge attack ... Willing to run and force opponents to chase him.

Easy-to-find target makes him far from a defensive wizard ... Most redeeming defensive quality is sturdy chin, though can be knocked down, as he was against Mack ... Willing to absorb three to land one ... Strong recuperative powers ... Leaky defense lures opponents into making costly mistakes.

Lucian Bute

Librado Andrade

Style

Bute and Andrade slug it out

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Straight-ahead plodder who wears down opponents with pressure ... Aggressive volume puncher who overwhelms adversaries with tenacity ... Able to break down opponents with body attack ... Works well inside ... Has made minor technical improvements ... Can be outboxed by technically superior fighter.

Heady counterpuncher who rarely lunges or leaves himself out of position ... Slick, clever boxer who presses opponents ... Fights well retreating, making foes pay when they get too close ... Relies on speed, southpaw jab ... Able to take advantage of opponent's mistakes.

Andrade crashes a left into Muller

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

The Questions

Can he avoid the same lapse in concentration that he fell victim to during the last round of the first encounter with Andrade? Will he fight more cautiously? Will he be able to keep Andrade off him? Will he have enough left to fight hard in the 12th round?

Will he start faster than he did in first Bute fight? Has he learned to deal with Bute's slick style? Will the memory of the first fight make him over anxious and force a costly mistake? Can he get a fair shake in Montreal?

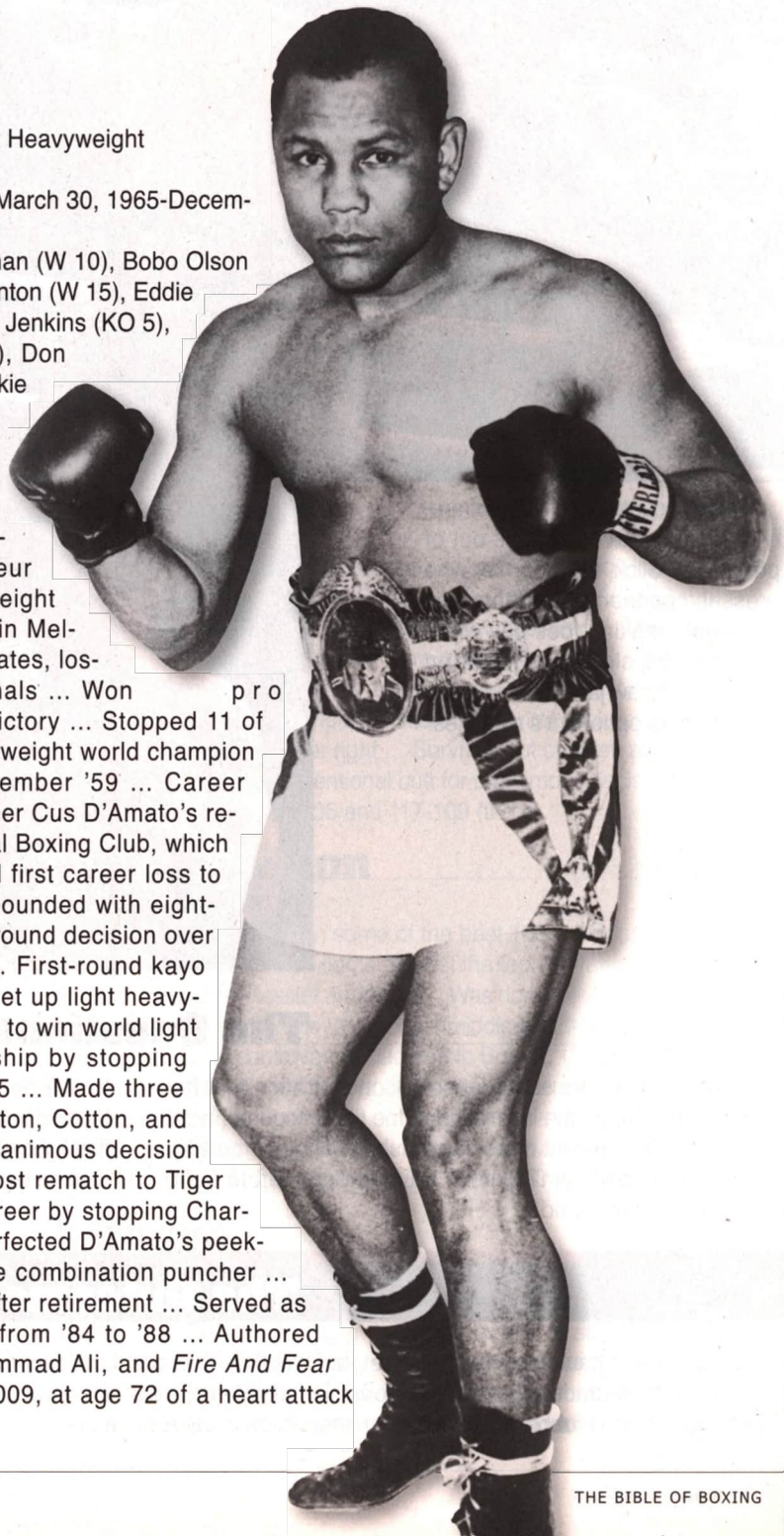
The Outcome

Bute will box cautiously at the outset, but this time Andrade, confident in his ability to hurt the titleholder, will get off to a quicker start. Andrade will press the Romanian expatriate, wear him down sooner than the first time, and stop him late in the fight—setting up a rubber match between them back at the Bell Centre.

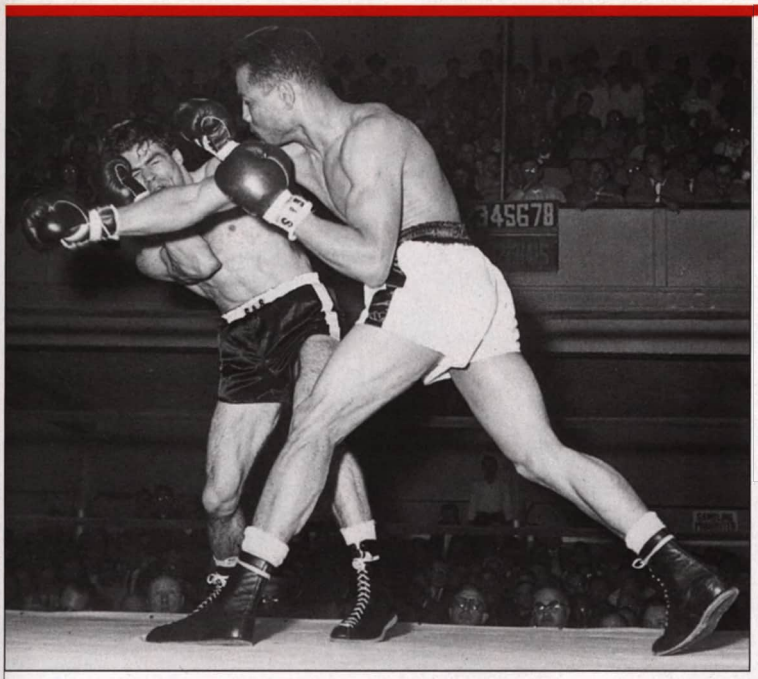
Hall of Fame Profile

THE RING features a thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York

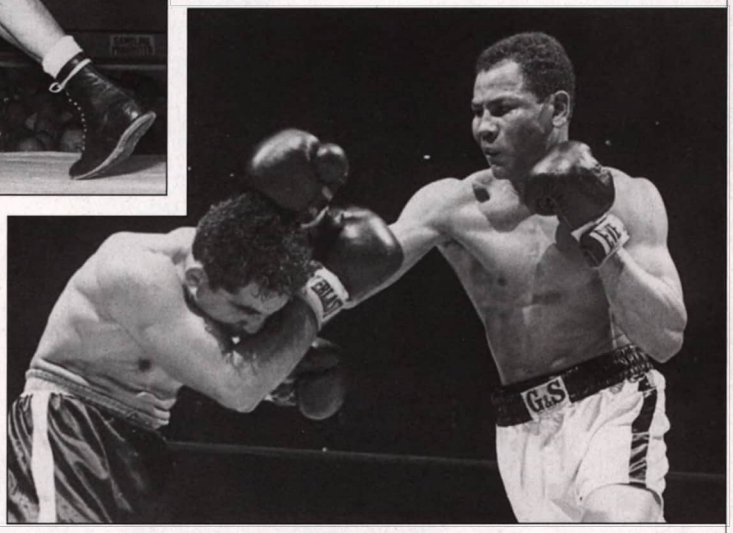
Jose Torres



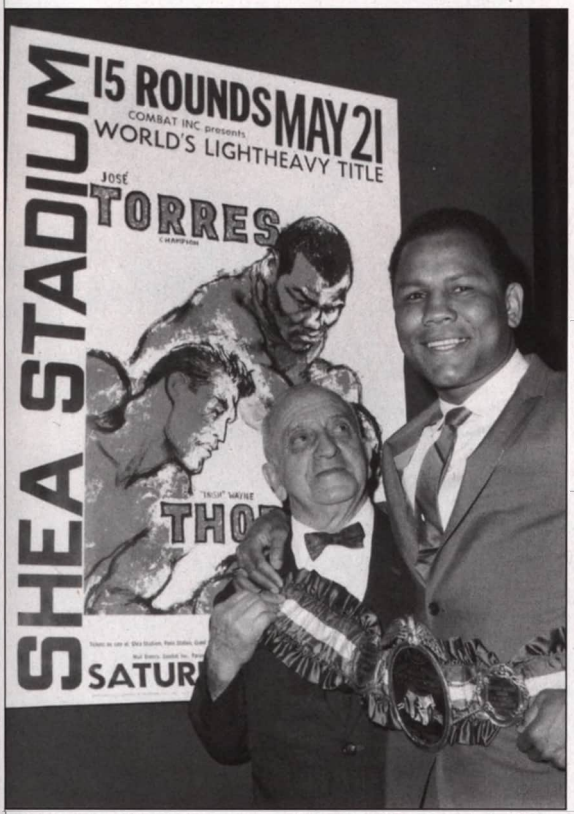
Birthdate: May 3, 1936
Date of Death: January 19, 2009
Birthplace: Playa Ponce, Puerto Rico
Nickname: Chegui
Weight Classes: Middleweight, Light Heavyweight
Professional Record: 41-3-1 (29)
Titles Held: World light heavyweight (March 30, 1965-December 16, 1966)
Best Performances: Gomeo Brennan (W 10), Bobo Olson (KO 1), Willie Pastrano (KO 9), Wayne Thornton (W 15), Eddie Cotton (W 15), Chic Calderwood (KO 2) Ike Jenkins (KO 5), Benny Paret (D 10), Randy Sandy (W 10), Don Fullmer (W 10), Jose Gonzalez (W 10), Frankie Olivera (KO 5).
Year of IBHOF Induction: 1997
Background: Was a street tough who turned his life around by enlisting in the U.S. Army, where he discovered boxing ... Won several Inter-Service amateur titles while in the army ... Light middleweight silver medalist in 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne, Australia, representing United States, losing to Hungary's Laszlo Papp in the finals ... Won pro debut in May '58 with first-round kayo victory ... Stopped 11 of first 13 opponents ... Fought future welterweight world champion Benny Paret to 10-round draw in September '59 ... Career growth and title shot retarded by the trainer Cus D'Amato's reluctance to deal with dubious International Boxing Club, which ran Madison Square Garden ... Suffered first career loss to Florentino Fernandez in May '63 ... Rebounded with eight-fight win streak ... Began streak with 10-round decision over contender Don Fullmer in October '63 ... First-round kayo victory of Bobo Olson in November '64 set up light heavyweight title shot ... Became first Hispanic to win world light heavyweight title, annexing championship by stopping Willie Pastrano in ninth round in May '65 ... Made three successful title defenses, against Thornton, Cotton, and Calderwood ... Title reign ended with unanimous decision loss to Dick Tiger in December '66 ... Lost rematch to Tiger by split decision in May '67 ... Closed career by stopping Charley Green in two rounds in July '69 ... Perfected D'Amato's peek-a-boo, hands-held-high style ... Effective combination puncher ... Remained heavily involved with boxing after retirement ... Served as New York State Athletic Commissioner from '84 to '88 ... Authored *Sting Like A Bee*, a biography of Muhammad Ali, and *Fire And Fear* about Mike Tyson ... Died January 19, 2009, at age 72 of a heart attack at his home in Ponce, Puerto Rico.



Torres slams Canadian Burke Emery with a right to the head. Torres went on to tally his eighth-straight victory, but more importantly, he was growing a fan base at New York's St. Nicholas Arena. Torres' fifth-round TKO drew in a record crowd of 4,116, the most to see a fight at St. Nicholas Arena in 20 years.



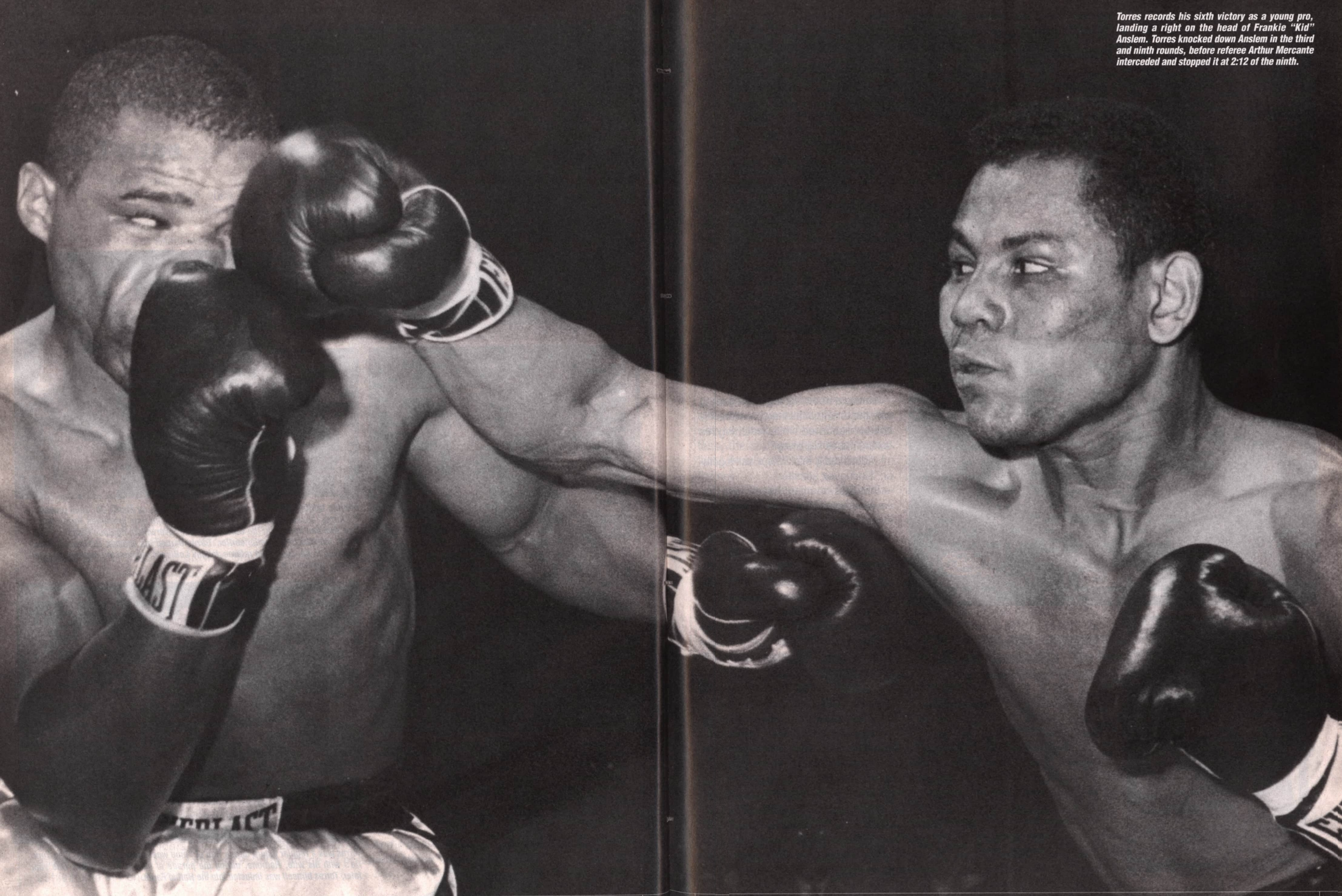
Beating Willie Pastrano in Madison Square Garden on March 30, 1965 proved to be Torres' crowning moment. Boxing politics at the time prevented Torres from a title shot and fighting at the Garden, but after overwhelming Bobo Olson in a one-round blowout four months earlier, Torres earned his chance. He knocked down Pastrano in the sixth, and referee Johnny LoBianco stopped the bout between the 9th and 10th rounds.



The affable Torres was awarded the light heavyweight world championship belt by Ring founder and editor Nat Fleischer in New York City, on April 27, 1966. The poster in the background behind Torres and Fleischer is advertising Torres' first title defense against, Wayne Thornton, who Torres beat by unanimous decision a month later.

PHOTO BY PAT ORR

Torres was a regular fixture during Hall of Fame weekends in Canastota, New York. He's with his wife, Ramona, during the parade of champions in 1996. One year later, Torres himself was inducted into the Hall of Fame.



Torres records his sixth victory as a young pro, landing a right on the head of Frankie "Kid" Anslem. Torres knocked down Anslem in the third and ninth rounds, before referee Arthur Mercante interceded and stopped it at 2:12 of the ninth.

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[New Faces]

(Continued from Page 24)

knockout power and aggressive boxer-puncher style is part of the reason. The other part of it is that he's someone from the neighborhood who everyone feels like they know. They've followed the saga of Rodriguez' twins and his climb back from the edge of tragedy in the local papers.

"There's been a passing of the torch in Worcester," said Larry Army, who manages Rodriguez.

Everyone on Rodriguez' team has high expectations for how far he will carry that torch, despite, or even because of, what Rodriguez has overcome with his family. Rodriguez said he doesn't regret for a moment the decision he made about his children or what it meant for his shot at the Olympics.

"It was the right thing to do," he said. "I would never chose anything over my family or my kids."

How did he hold it together, dealing with the drama of all the operations his children endured while watching his boxing hopes slip away?

"I don't really think I kept it all together," Rodriguez admitted.

Actually, he might never have discovered boxing if not for bad weather. He didn't see his first boxing match until 1999, shortly after moving to the United States, when Oscar De La Hoya fought Ike Quartey. Coming from the baseball-mad Dominican Republic, he never gave the sport a second thought. Massachusetts snow forced him indoors, where he traded his baseball mitt for boxing gloves.

Naturally competitive—ask him if he's any good at his hobby, chess, and he'll challenge you to a game—Rodriguez discovered he loved the one-on-one, no-excuses aspect of boxing. Possessing excellent speed and a lanky frame, he soon won amateur laurels.

Rivera became somewhat of a mentor to Rodriguez, sparring with him and offering him advice on his diet. Rodriguez would say, "I want to get where you are." Rivera would answer, "I don't want you to say you want to be as good as me. I want you to say you want to be better than me."

Rodriguez slams a left jab into Patrick Thompson. Rodriguez had to take a brief sabbatical in April after the Thompson victory to get bone chips removed from each elbow. But he's back on track with the aim to get a **ShoBox** *date in 2010.*

As good as things are now, as much as everyone surrounding Rodriguez insists he is never without a smile on his face, the sadness he felt when his twins were so sick has affected him in the ring.

"He once told me he took all of the pain from his personal life and he just puts it on his opponent," Army said. "He thinks, *That's the person who did this to my kids.*"

Neither Army nor trainer Peter Manfredo Sr. wants to rob Rodriguez of his aggressiveness. His speed made him a good amateur, and he developed punching accuracy he still counts as his finest asset. But as a pro, his power combines with a finisher's instinct and an offense he describes as "not economical" to make him dangerous—and exciting.

Even Rodriguez admits he sometimes starts fights too wildly, which he attributes to the pain of his past and his desire to please fans. "Controlled aggression" is his team's mantra. And while Rodriguez can slip punches when he chooses to, Manfredo said he has to concentrate more on defense, plus continue to sandpaper down some bad habits he got away with as an amateur, like pulling straight back and dropping his left hand.

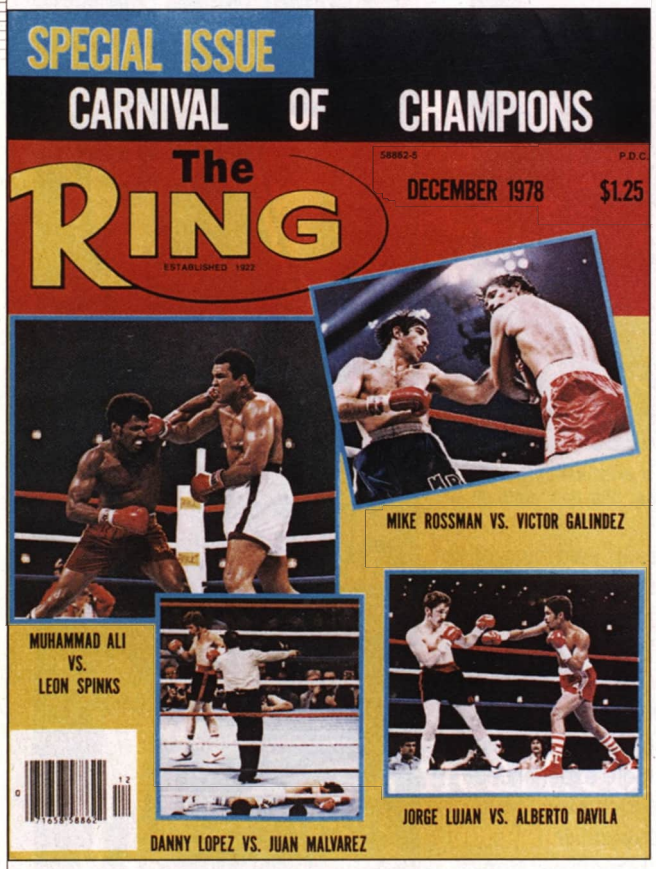
Fortunately, Manfredo said, two of Rodriguez' best attributes are that he's smart—he hopes one day to return to his abandoned college education so he can become a math teacher—and he's passionate about getting better. Working in Manfredo's gym, he gets to learn in sparring sessions with more experienced pros such as Jesse Brinkley, Matt Godfrey, and Peter Manfredo Jr.

In the short-term, Rodriguez' handlers have slowed him down so he can recover from April surgery on both elbows to remove 16 bone chips and get back into the rhythm he was building. Then they will try to get him on *ShoBox* in 2010 and contending for a middleweight title the year after.

Rodriguez has a powerful motive: making a better life for his children. And he has already conquered trials in life that few 24-year-olds have, the kind of trials that will steel him for the moment every prospect eventually encounters—when an opponent hits him, hurts him, and puts his career in jeopardy. Then he'll have to make a decision he made once before: Should he fight on, knowing how much worse it might get? Or should he throw in the towel?

It's pretty clear which choice he'll make. ■

December 1978



COVER STORY: "Carnival Of Champions" refers to the September 15 card at the New Orleans Superdome, headlined by Muhammad Ali's rematch with reigning heavyweight champion Leon Spinks, plus three other title fights. The show drew a record-breaking indoor crowd of 63,532 and generated a live gate of $4,806,675. The audience for ABC's live telecast (estimated at 80,000,000) was the second largest in TV history, surpassed only by the final episode of *Roots*, up until that time.

"This latest New Orleans Carnival was run with a festive spirit that gave one the feeling of being part of a gigantic weekend house party," writes Editor Nat Loubet. "There were jazz bands in attendance while you were eating, while you were in the lobby, while you were on the streets … one could hardly refrain from entering into a feeling of well being. Fireworks added to the merry rhythms and the loose spirit that pervaded the carnival air seemed like the most natural way of life."

The fight itself, however, was no "Rumble In The Jungle" or "Thrilla In Manila."

"The Ali-Spinks fight would have been listed as a bore if Ali hadn't been the attraction. The entire fight was ordinary with Spinks charging after Ali from the opening bell, and Ali using his years of ring savvy to dance, move from right to left and reverse, stab the champion with lefts, and put on an exhibition that could be termed a good gym workout."

The decision in Ali's favor was never in doubt, and all three judges scored it in his favor, 11 rounds to 4. The victory also made Ali the first to win the heavyweight title three times.

The other title fights were a mixed bag. From a purely entertainment point of view, Mike Rossman's upset of Victor Galindez, via 13th-round TKO to win the WBA light heavyweight title, stole the show. WBA featherweight titleholder Danny Lopez' second-round kayo of Juan Malvarez was short but sensational, with Lopez forced to overcome a first-round knockdown before stopping his Argentine challenger in the second. In the fourth title bout, WBA bantamweight titlist Jorge Lujan won a 15-round decision over Alberto Davila in a fight Loubet describes as "anything but scintillating."

World Champions

(for the period ended October 11, 1978)
Heavyweight: Muhammad Ali
Light Heavyweight: vacant
Middleweight: Hugo Corro
Junior Middleweight: Masahi Kudo
Welterweight: Carlos Palomino
Junior Welterweight: Wilfred Benitez
Lightweight: Roberto Duran
Junior Lightweight: Samuel Serrano
Featherweight: vacant
Bantamweight: Jorge Lujan
Flyweight: Miguel Canto

Rossman upsets Galindez on Ali-Spinks II card

"Cuevas Rubs Out Ranzany" is Christopher Coats' account of WBA welterweight titleholder Pipino Cuevas' destruction of hometown hero Pete Ranzany in front of 17,255 disappointed fans at Hughes Stadium in Sacramento, California.

"That the 26-year-old challenger would not survive the second round had not been foreseen or even considered," writes Coats. "Ranzany had lost only once in the past four years, that due to an eye cut. And yet Cuevas turned the fight around with one smashing left hook, a dream-perfect punch, to Ranzany's cheek at the one-minute mark of the second frame. Following two knockdowns and a storm of devastating hooks, referee Isidro Rodriguez, of Venezuela, halted the fight at 1:57."

Cuevas ends Ranzany's title bid inside of two rounds

"Leonard Over Mayweather" by Don Hamill chronicles Ray Leonard's 10th-round TKO of Floyd Mayweather, whose son, Floyd Jr., was still in diapers at the time. Despite being knocked down twice and failing to finish the fight, Mayweather was somewhat dismissive in his evaluation of the future Hall of Famer.

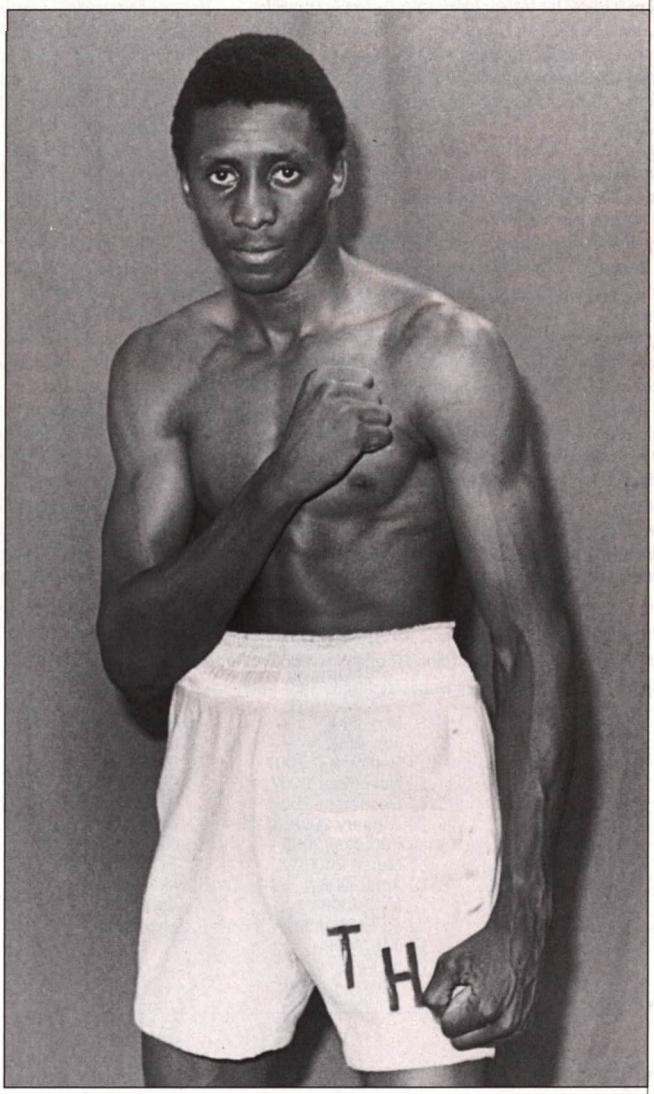
"He's a fairly decent puncher, but he's no kayo artist," said Mayweather. "You've got to have a punch in this game. If you ain't got a punch, you can't keep people off you. As Leonard moves up the ladder trying to get the title, he's gonna meet a lot of people like that."

"Introducing Tommy Hearns" by Barry Levine was written shortly after the "Hitman's" 11th pro fight and his 11th consecutive knockout, a second-round blitz of Eddie Marcelle in front of 6,125 fans at Detroit's Olympic Stadium.

"Bringing back memories of Sugar Ray Robinson, Thomas Hearns is making quite a name for himself in these parts," writes Levine. "The 19-year-old welterweight has been finishing off opponents the way the dudes in the auto plants roll out Pintos."

"Canadian Maritimes" by local correspondent Michael Doherty, features future WBA heavyweight titleholder Trevor Berbick in his 10th professional bout, a fourth-round TKO of New York's Greg Johnson at the Halifax (Nova Scotia) Metro Center.

"Both threw bombs with reckless abandon throughout the brawl," writes Doherty. "Somebody had to fall. Johnson hit the deck three times before (referee) Herb MacMullen stopped it. Johnson scored plenty himself. Both men gave all, but Berbick had the power." ■



Hearns at age 19

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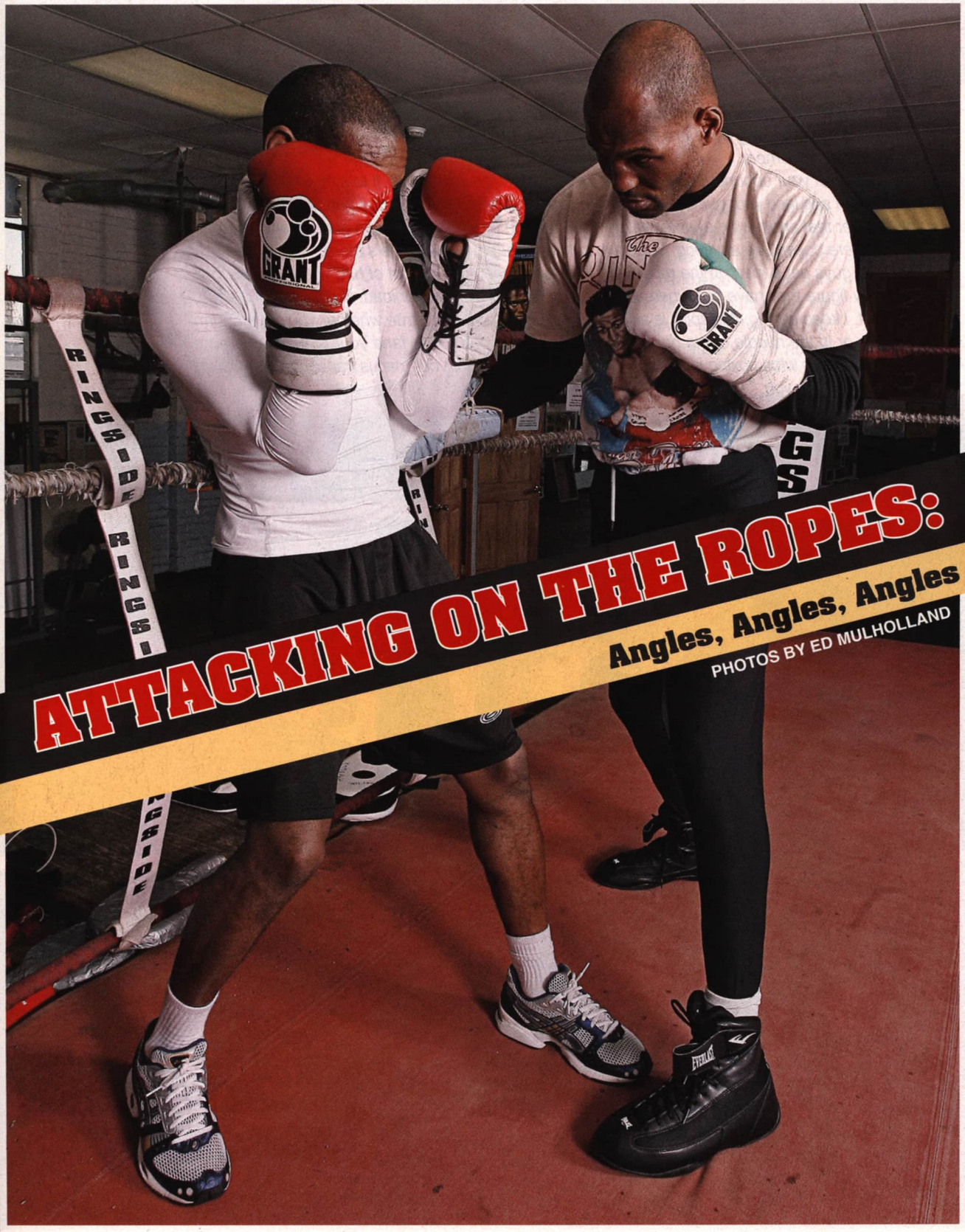
Boxing Lessons From A Living Legend

By Bernard Hopkins



ATTACKING ON THE ROPES:

Angles, Angles, Angles

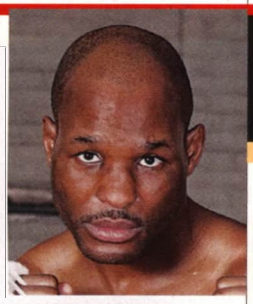
PHOTOS BY ED MULHOLLAND

Nobody wants to get caught on the ropes or in a corner. You know why. You hear trainers and boxing announcers talking about it all the time, how this guy has to stay off the ropes, especially if he's in with a puncher. And it's true. You get caught on the ropes or in a corner by someone who knows what he's doing, and you could be in trouble because there's nowhere to go.

Some guys like to try to be Muhammad Ali or Wilfred Benitez and fight off the ropes, but those guys who can do that come along once in a lifetime. Unless you're very good at it, your job is stay off the ropes and out of the corners.

You want to get your opponent on the ropes for the same reason you want to stay off of them. You want to trap him and land your punches, put him in a defensive position. If you're good at cutting off the ring (we'll cover that another time) and can get your man on the ropes, you're in good shape. But just getting him there doesn't do anything. You have to know what to do when he's there.

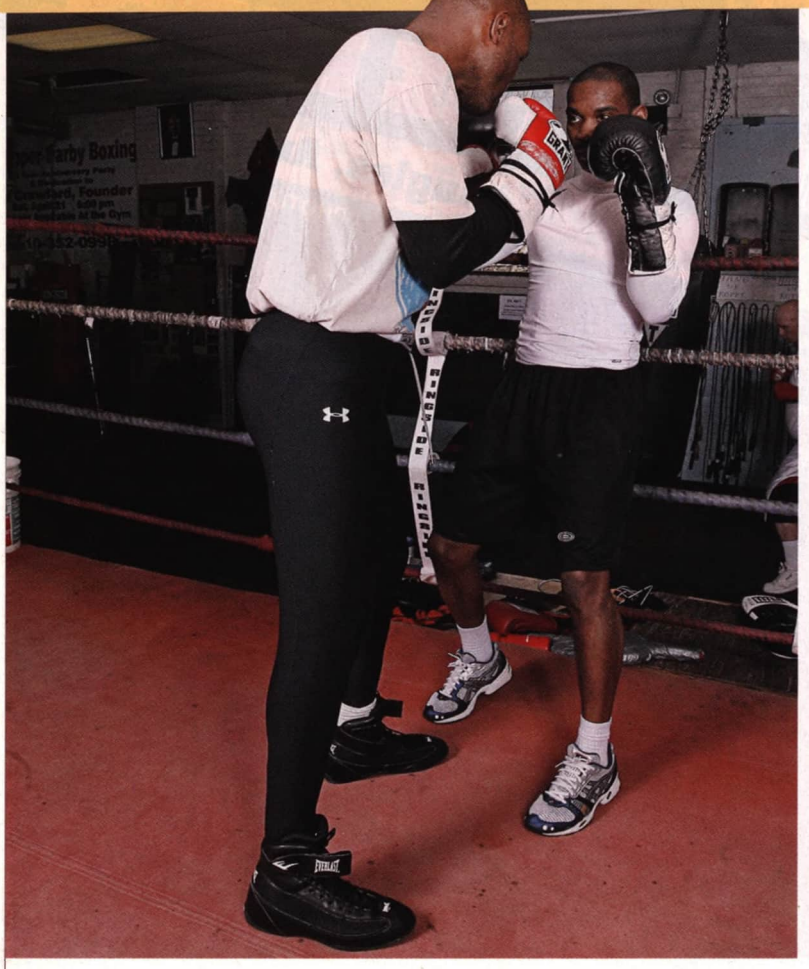
Too many guys get a man on the ropes and they just stand right in front of him winging big shots, because they figure they have him where they want him and it's time to unload. But that's not boxing; it's not smart. I keep saying, this sport is all about positioning and that's true whether you have a man on the ropes or in the middle of the ring. You want to be in a position to land your punches while he can't land his. That's what boxing is all about, even when you've got your man is trapped. Here, Danny Davis and I will show you.



BERNARD HOPKINS
Is the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion of the world.

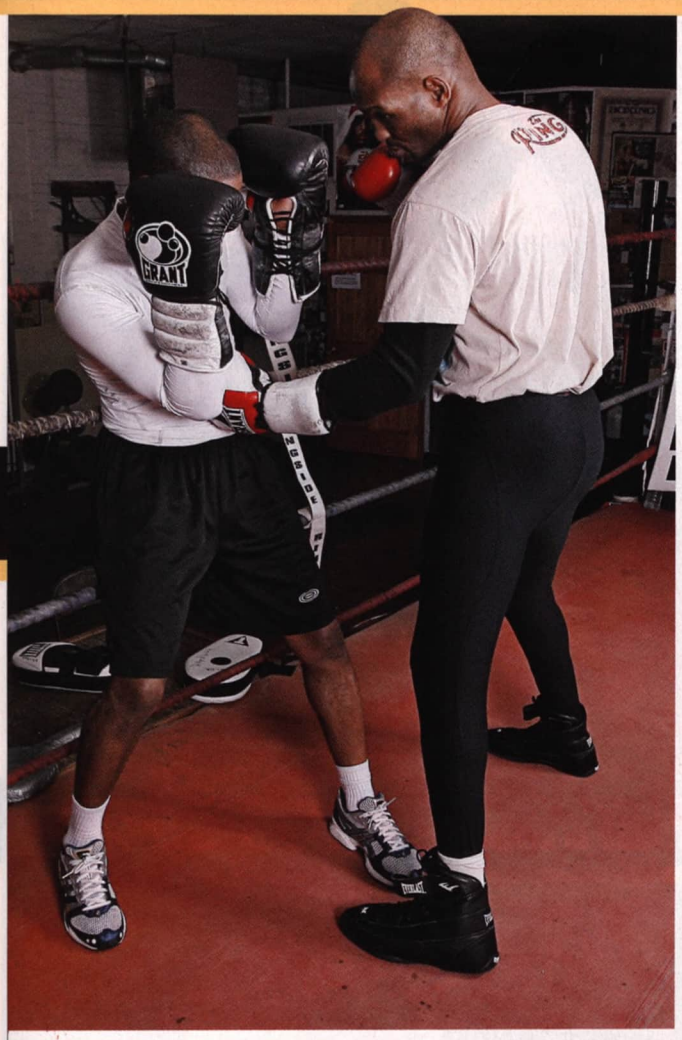
(All photos taken at Andy Carr's Gym in Upper Darby, PA)

GET CLOSE



AS ALWAYS, YOU CAN'T HIT A MAN IF YOU'RE NOT CLOSE ENOUGH TO HIM. Get in there close and remember your form: hands up, chin down, on balance, looking straight ahead. You don't forget everything you've learned just because your opponent is on the ropes. You can approach him straight on, like I'm doing here.

TAKE A STEP TO THE SIDE

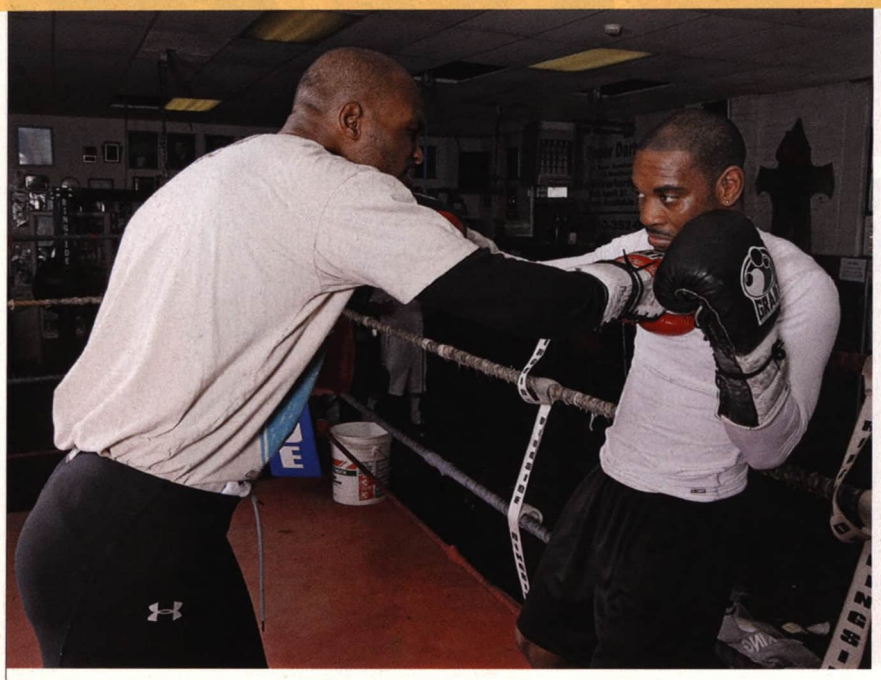


ONE MINUTE YOU'RE IN FRONT OF HIM AND THEN YOU TAKE THAT SMALL STEP TO THE SIDE—in this case to your right—and you've got a perfect angle on him. You can dig your left to the body and that sets up all kinds of other punches. And he can't do anything about it because you're not in front of him to be hit.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT HIM GETTING AWAY

KEEP ATTACKING FROM THE SIDE. Some guys feel like if they do that they're giving him an escape route, so they get right in front of him. That's wrong. You can keep attacking from the side like I am here. When you do that you're moving him backward and in a defensive position and then if you want to, you can switch to the other side.

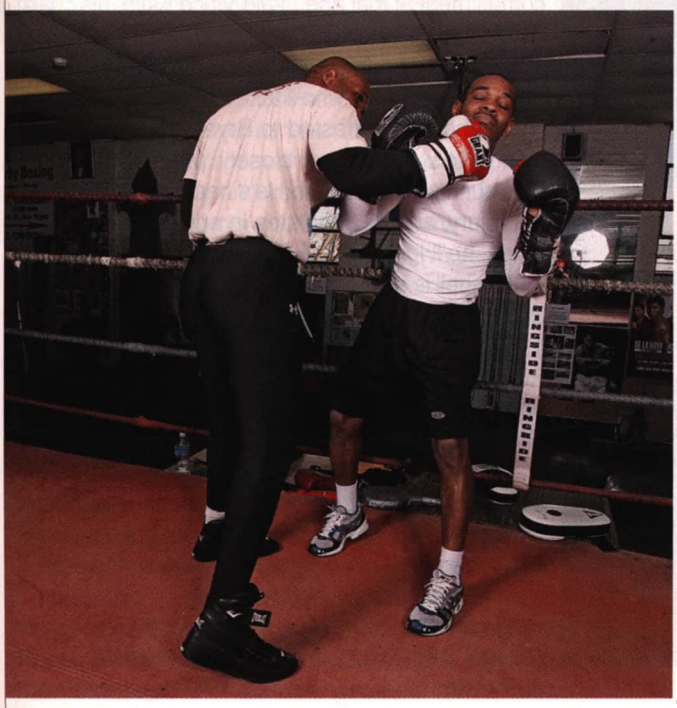
THE WRONG WAY: RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOUR MAN

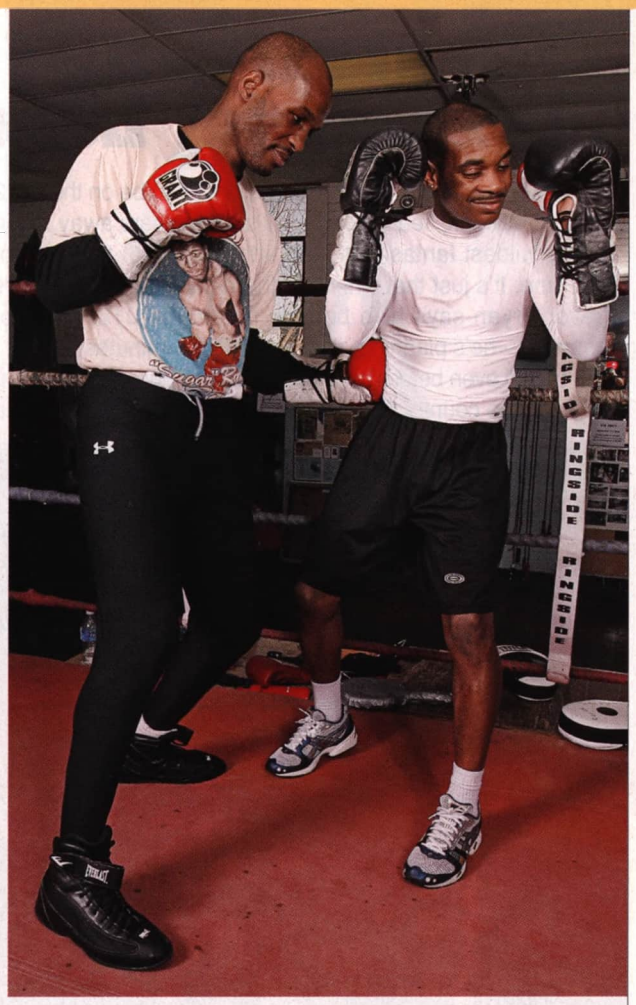


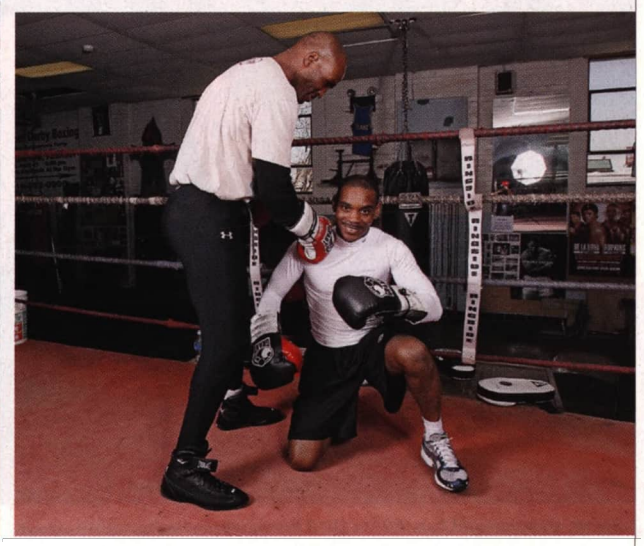
HERE'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU GO STRAIGHT AHEAD AND JUST START THROWING BIG PUNCHES: You're wide open right down the middle, the way I am when Danny counters my right with a straight right of his own. It doesn't matter if he's on the ropes; if you're right in front of your man he can hit you as easily as you can hit him. That's why you step to the side.

MAKE EVERY PUNCH COUNT

THIS IS THE PERFECT WAY TO ATTACK WHEN YOU'VE GOT YOUR MAN ON THE ROPES. It starts to the body and ends to the head, plus, because I have my left foot outside his right foot and I'm attacking his right side, there's nothing he can do to me. He can't hit me from that angle. You land this and your man will be down just like Danny is—except he won't be smiling!







By Michael Rivest

Trevor Bryan: Planning for London 2012

It's every young American boxer's dream to be on the 2012 U.S. Olympic Team. After all, it's three years away. Even the wildest fantasies sound attainable with that kind of lead-time. It's just that when Northern Michigan University's Trevor Bryan says he's London bound in 2012, he's not dreaming—he's planning, right down to the minutest detail.

It began even before he enrolled at NMU, the only four-year school in the country that awards boxing scholarships. Bryan was at a tournament there three years ago while still a 10th grader at Albany, New York's Bishop Maginn High School.

"As long as I was there, I asked some guy where I could get a boxing scholarship because my plan was to box and go to college. Turns out he was with the United States Olympic Committee. He looked at me like I was crazy. 'Right here,' he said."

So far Trevor's plan is right on course: graduate high school, grab one of those coveted spots at NMU and major in both culinary arts and criminal justice, win five national amateur titles, and become a sparring partner for Olympic super heavyweight hopeful, Michael Hunter.

PHOTO BY LUIS MARTIN

Bryan: Heavyweight hopeful for 2012 Olympics

"I've been so lucky to have found what I wanted," said the 20-year-old Bryan. "I'm not the best boxer, you know, one of those naturally gifted athletes. But nobody wants 2012 more, and I'll get there."

Bryan's mature blend of gratitude and humility are a little disarming, wrapped as they are in a 6'4", 260-pound frame that makes you feel like you're sitting across from Lennox Lewis.

"Trevor is a unique kid to have such a level of commitment at that age," said Vince Kittle, his coach for over 10 years, before handing him off to NMU's Al Mitchell. "He knows the break he got with this scholarship. He's not a kid who'll take it for granted."

Mitchell also attested to Bryan's determination: "I have to watch Trevor closely, precisely because he's such a hard worker. He's had a nagging shoulder injury, and if I don't step in and stop him sometimes, he'll ignore it."

Mitchell is aware that he has something special in Bryan because he knows what special looks like. In 1989, Mitchell was head coach at the U.S. Olympic Education Center, training such outstanding boxers as Vernon Forrest, Brian Viloria, Jermain Taylor, and Olympic gold medalist David Reid.

Whenever you ask a boxer to name his best asset, you're usually in for a sermonette on his straight right or how well he hooks off the jab, but not Bryan. His answer was as different as it was immediate: "I want it more than anybody else."

He also has a jab that makes you think of Larry Holmes. And, like Holmes, who could knock people dizzy with his scary straight left, Bryan has sent

opponents home early on more than one occasion. Moreover, when he goes to the body, his opponents wince.

Asking Mitchell the same question about Bryan's best asset garnered a different but equally surprising answer.

"His mother."

What? Did you say his mother?

"That's right," Mitchell said, with absolute seriousness. "I realized early on that there's a foundation under all his ambition and determination. She centers him. He'll call her before and after every bout. So I call him 'Mama's boy.'"

Mitchell and Bryan can joke about it because they know that the bond between Trevor and his mom is not an immature dependency, but rather a healthy and mutual reliance. Two years ago, when his mother was struggling to get her diabetes under control, Bryan worked two part-time jobs to help support her. This is the kind of kid you want your daughter to meet.

One last question of Trevor led to another surprisingly mature answer. "What's your biggest fear?" The answer to that question usually comes in two forms: "Losing" or "What fear?" But Bryan paused and said, "Becoming too one-dimensional. I know how easy it can be to rely on what you have, and then suddenly you're in the ring with somebody who shows you something different. I don't want that to happen. When talent doesn't work, it's usually because it's beaten by somebody who's worked harder than you."

Will Bryan be on the U.S.A. squad when it travels to London in 2012? We'll have to wait and see. But he wants you to know that he's not dreaming. He's planning.

Gavin Stowe: A Shining Example

The next time you're listening to somebody pontificate about the evils of youth boxing, tell them about Gavin Stowe.

Stowe is 11 years old and in the sixth grade at Maurice Elementary School in Maurice, Louisiana. He's a straight-A student, everybody likes him, and on July 11 he won the Louisiana/ Mississippi Junior Golden Gloves Championship in the 75-pound weight division.

Oh, be sure to mention that everyone from his doctors and teachers, to his grandmother, Ms. Abranda Sparks, credit his passion for boxing and accomplishments in the ring for much of his recovery from a childhood accident.

At age three, Stowe nearly drowned in a backyard swimming pool. Without oxygen for nearly 12 minutes, doctors feared brain damage. Within a year, it was clear that his speech and learning were profoundly affected. Recognizing he was not like his peers, Stowe became frustrated and socially isolated.

Then at nine, his older cousin took him into Beau Williford's Ragin' Cajun Boxing Gym in Lafayette, Louisiana.

"This was not good news at first," said Ms. Sparks. She took Stowe to his doctor, hoping she'd say forget it. "But the doctor betrayed me and told him to go ahead."

The change in Stowe came very quickly. He had found something in his life he could control, something that demanded and received everything from him—determination, focus, courage—only without the social complexity that typically accompanies team sports.

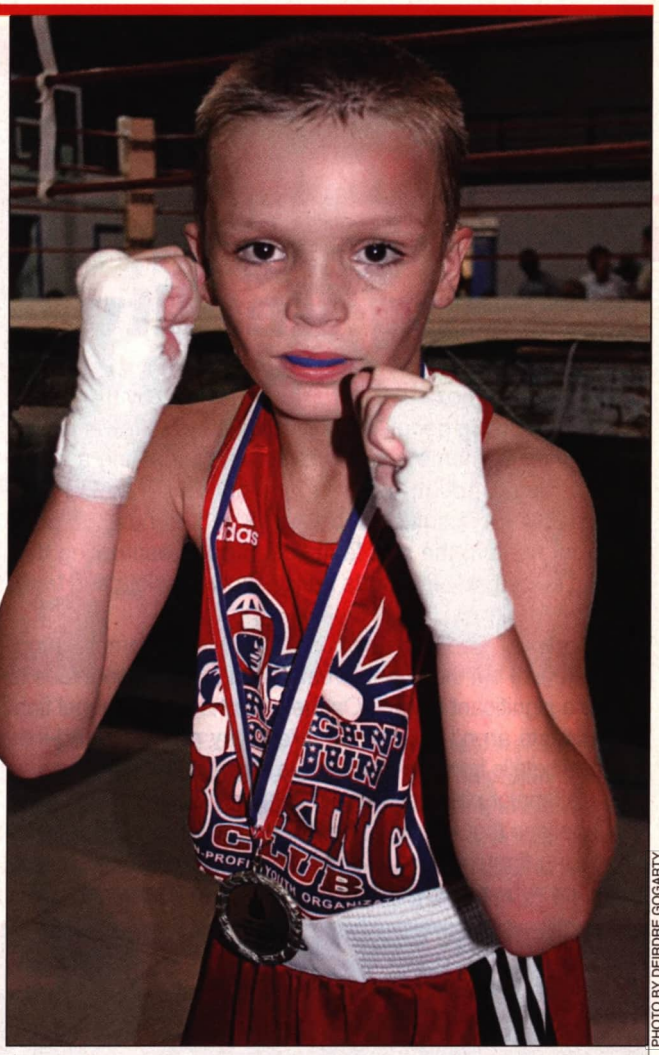


PHOTO BY DEIRDRE GOGARTY

Stowe: Overcoming adversity

Williford and Coach Dierdre Gogarty went so far as to bring a special education teacher into the gym to assist with the boy's training.

"He is so incredibly dedicated. We wanted to do everything possible to support him," Gogarty said. "He is simply in love with boxing."

Doctors report remarkable development strides in the two years since Gavin walked into Williford's gym, attributing the growth to boxing's demands for equal use of left and right hands, unlike in other sports where one side dominates. "Boxing helped his brain compensate," said Gogarty.

Gavin Stowe has found something, and he isn't about to let it go. ■

Coming Events

U.S.A. vs. Great Britain Trilogy
October 16 in Norfolk, Virginia
October 24 in St. Louis, Missouri
October 30 in Des Moines, Iowa

[The Fight Doctor]

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Making Reality A Reality

Like many boxing purists, I am frustrated by the sport's diminishing popularity. As fans recognize fewer champions by name, mixed martial arts is gaining a stronger foothold through TV programs such as *The Ultimate Fighter*. There is sufficient blame to go around. But in my humble opinion, the real fault lies in underestimating that boxing is the greatest sports reality show possible and treating it accordingly.

Shows like *The Contender* and HBO's *24/7* garner temporary interest, but they fail to create enough permanent fans to make a significant impact. On the other hand, traditional fight broadcasts aren't able to capture many of the behind-the-scenes details from the perspective of the officials and cornermen, all major players in how a fight unfolds and finishes.

"I believe that television no longer humanizes and personalizes the fights as well as the medium once did," said Steve Farhood, who provides ringside analysis for Showtime's *Showbox* broadcasts. "The first season of *The Contender* did this very well, and NBC canceling the series after one season was a crushing blow. Television is a visual medium, and I feel today's networks cover live bouts quite well. The fight's the thing, and that's not ever to be forgotten."

The Contender, while overall a great concept, gave an artificial, almost formulaic view of the fights themselves by employing edited versions and phony sound effects. It did, however, allow viewers to get to know the fighters as people as well as athletes.

Showtime boxing and MMA Executive Producer David Dinkins Jr. believes the biggest challenge boxing faces remains in televising a 360-degree sport.

"Basketball and football are sports that go left to right," said Dinkins, who was also a consultant for *The Contender*'s first season. "Baseball is vertical from home plate, but boxing is all there in the open for you to see."

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

The Contender ***humanized the fighters, but doctored the fights***

PHOTO BY JAY LASH/DKP

The scene in Holyfield's dressing room included prayers

Even so, things can happen that even the best-produced fight coverage can miss. Like the rearview mirror in a car, there are often blind spots out of camera range.

Technology has improved the presentation, and Dinkins noted that one of the biggest advancements in coverage was convincing promoters and commissions to allow a hand-held camera on the ring apron. Another was the microphone in the corners so the cornermen could be heard giving instructions between rounds.

Today, most networks use two long-range cameras—two hand-held on the ring apron, and occasionally a revolving camera on a crane (jib). It is the executive producer and director that end up deciding the angle the home viewer sees. But even ringside you get a stilted view. It is why there is a judge on three sides of the ring and often their seat position explains score variances.

No one sees a fight as close as the referee. Kenny Bayless has worked Nevada fights for more than 18 years, and his proximity to the action gives him and his fellow referees the best view of what is happening inside the ring.

"There are little things I notice when I re-watch a fight that I refereed on television that may not be picked up, depending on the camera angle," he said. "When a fighter is slightly hurt, I can see it in his eyes that he is in trouble; TV can't tell. There have been times when both fighters are trash-talking and TV doesn't pick it up."

Farhood believes the greatest difference between sitting ringside as opposed to sitting in your living room is the impact of the punches, especially the jabs and the bodypunches that hurt a lot more than they appear to on television. By and large, the fights are considerably more authentic and visceral when viewed from ringside.

"I just finished watching a handful of memorable Arturo Gatti fights, and on TV he sometimes came off as a cartoon action figure," said Farhood. "Up close and personal, the pain, the blood, and the violence are much more palpable."

As a former ring physician, I first met fighters at the weigh-in, often seeing them alone in a makeshift dressing room, which emphasizes their humanity. In such settings, I was privy to Oscar De La Hoya's nervousness as a 21-year-old fighting at the MGM Grand Garden for the first time, and, by contrast, the relaxed attitude of Lennox Lewis. I witnessed Evander Holyfield's prefight dressing room ritual of handholding and prayer before stepping in to the ring. Diego Corrales cried on my shoulder after his loss to Floyd Mayweather.

These are the intimate details that make you root for one fighter over another and feel a boxer's pain and sorrow at a loss and joy over a win. I believe that these crucial background details are overlooked or misunderstood. Regardless of whether the television networks like it or not, the referee, ring physician, and the commission play an integral role in a fight's evolution.

In addition, the fighters' history, including their training programs, injuries, suspensions from their last bout, and the capabilities of their cornermen all play a strong role in an outcome, but are seldom detailed on television.

Yes, it is wonderful that there are microphones in corners between rounds, but that's not enough. We need more information: What are the key factors the referee and physician are using to make their decision to stop a bout or allow it to continue? When is a fight stopped on a cut and why? What is the referee seeing in the fighter's eyes that prompt him to terminate the fight?

These are all valuable pieces of the puzzle that make boxing the ultimate reality show and will, I believe, extend its popularity if shared more extensively with the fans. The trick is to find a way to combine all the elements, not just the fight, into a compelling package. ■

By Jim Bagg

The Decade's Biggest "Didn'ts"

In the big picture, 10 years is nothing. The earth has been spinning around on its axis for millions of years, and the Baggtastic has been sitting around on his lazy axis for at least a couple hundred. When you've been around a while, marking the end of another decade starts to feel like marking the end of another week.

Still, the decade is ending, and every Thomas, Richard, and Harold is preparing his "best of" lists. When you're a glass-completely-empty guy like the Baggmeister, however, "best of" ain't exactly your bag. No, when these bloodshot eyes look back on the first decade of the 2000s, they look back and bemoan the things they missed out on. Sure, there were some good fights and good fighters, but we'll leave those to all the unimaginative hacks to write about. The Baggapalooza is putting his own spin on things, as he always does. So here are the five fights he wishes he'd seen this decade that never happened.

(Note: Desired rematches not included. These are fights we never saw, not fights we saw once and wished we'd seen again.)

1. Juan Manuel Marquez vs. Erik Morales: Morales fought Marco Antonio Barrera three times and Manny Pacquiao three times. Marquez fought Barrera once and Pacquiao twice. Barrera and Pacquiao fought twice. But

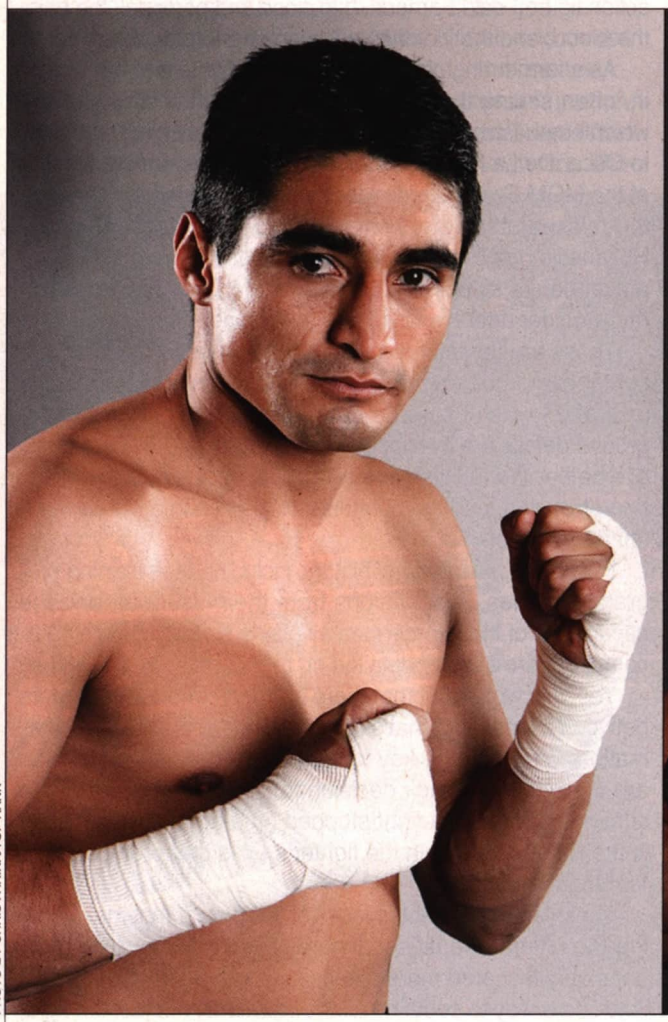


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

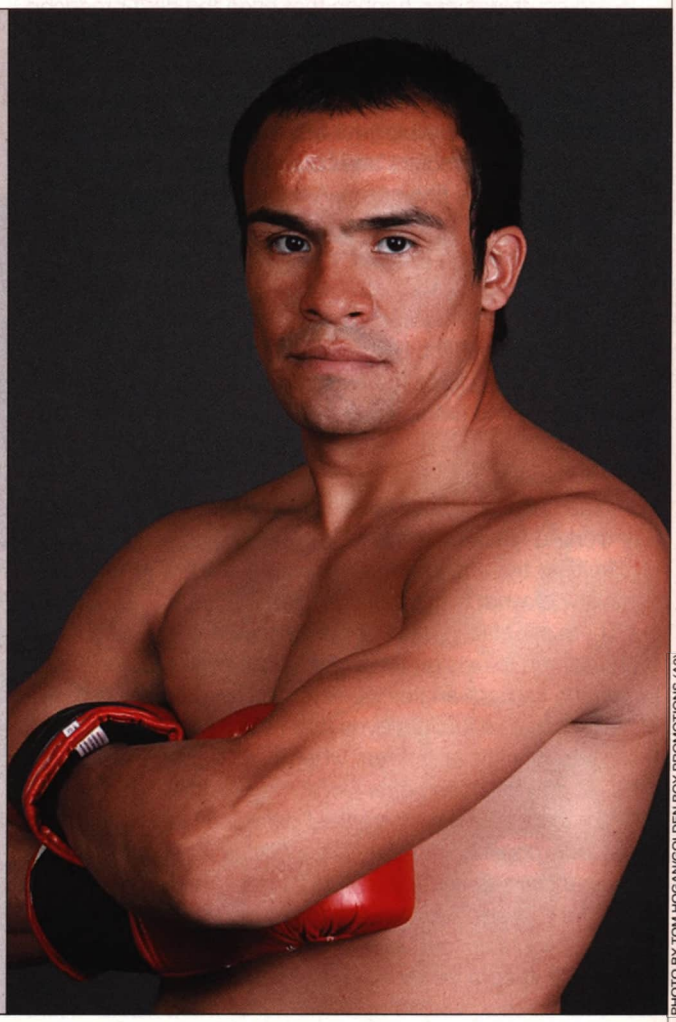


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS (A2)

Morales-Marquez: Superfight that never happened

Marquez-Morales never happened. It's like going to the buffet and finding out they're all out of prime rib. Sure, the buffet was good, but it was incomplete.

Marquez-Morales is the missing link in the greatest featherweight round robin ever, and it would have been a surefire scorcher just like all of the other fights between the stars of this era were. Yeah, we got 11 memorable fights out of combinations of these four little warriors. But Baggy Arbuckle is obsessing over the one that got away. (Told ya the Baggster's a glass-completely-empty kind of a guy.)

2. Roy Jones vs. Mike Tyson: There was a small window for this fight to happen—in 2003, after Jones slapped John Ruiz silly but before he went back down to light heavyweight and before Tyson lost his marketability by falling in defeat to the sort of journeymen who couldn't last 90 seconds with him in his prime. For a few months, this would have been the biggest fight you could make in all of boxing, and it would have been a fascinating matchup.

Would "Iron Mike" have knocked Jones into bolivian? Would Jones have turned Tyson's face into one big tattoo? Would something have happened to change the extreme downward trajectory both careers soon followed? We'll never know. But we know this much: Danny Williams, Kevin McBride, Antonio Tarver, and Glen Johnson are four people who are very happy that Jones-Tyson didn't happen. The rest of us are bummed.

3. Oscar De La Hoya vs. Winky Wright: De La Hoya fought everybody who was anybody near his weight this decade, no matter how threatening, as long as they brought some money to the table. In other words, he fought everybody who was any good except for Wright. The Winkster twice beat Shane Mosley, he shut out Felix Trinidad, he was as deserving of a fight with "The Golden Boy" as anyone, but it didn't happen because his style spelled trouble for everyone and his fan base consisted of a couple of rappers, a dozen guys he went to grade school with in Florida, and a handful of blind guys who can only judge a fight's entertainment value by what they can hear.

We all know why Oscar didn't make this fight. But from a competitive standpoint, for the good of determining where the greats of this era stand in comparison to one another, it should have happened.

4. Felix Trinidad vs. Shane Mosley: They both fought De La Hoya and they both fought Wright, but they never fought each other—and in 2000/2001, what a huge showdown it would have been. After Mosley beat De La Hoya, and around the time Trinidad was pounding David Reid and Fernando Vargas, they were both staking their claim to the pound-for-pound title (sorry, Roy Jones, but you have to fight an occasional living, breathing, adult male to remain in the discussion). It's not often that pound-for-pound supremacy is settled in the ring. Trinidad vs. Mosley would have done that.

And both "Tito" and "Sugar Shane" had offense-first mentalities, which means we would have seen fireworks. It's a fight that made perfect sense. So, this being boxing, it was never seriously discussed. Oh well, maybe in 2016, another three ill-advised Trinidad comebacks from now, we can finally see it.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Jones should have tackled Tyson after beating Ruiz

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Imagine what would have happened if Corrales had fought Gatti

5. Arturo Gatti vs. Diego Corrales: Somewhere up in heaven or down in hell or wherever these crazy SOBs ended up, there's still a chance of this bloody war happening. But we won't be lucky enough to see it.

Gatti and Corrales fought and lived with the same reckless intensity, and the two of them together (remember, they were only one weight class apart from 2004 to 2006) would have produced a guaranteed classic. If you thought Corrales-Jose Luis Castillo was fun, or Gatti-Micky Ward packed action, just imagine what it would have been like if the more dramatic fighter in each pairing got paired together. Gatti vs. Corrales would have featured 83 knockdowns, 47 horrific cuts, and 65 F-bombs apiece from Joe Goossen and Buddy McGirt.

And that's all prior to the start of round two.

David Haye: Evil Genius

For a couple of supposedly capable chess players, Wladimir and Vitali Klitschko sure got beaten up and down the board over the summer by David Haye. Haye outmaneuvered them, plain and simple. The Brit was like a knight, moving in such a way that he could strike unexpectedly, while the Klitschkos both thought they were kings and ended up being pawns.

Don't believe what you've heard and read about Haye being poorly guided by his manager, Adam Booth. Don't believe anyone who tells you that Haye's double-switcheroo was the product of his stupidity. It was, in fact, exactly the opposite. The Baggerooski sees what really happened here, and he has no choice but to recognize Haye as a strategic mastermind.

Put yourself in Haye's shoes for a moment: You're sick of killing yourself to make the cruiserweight limit, you're ready to move up to heavyweight, but you know damned well you don't have the chin to hang with the best of the big boys, namely Wladdy and the Vitmeister. You give yourself a reasonable chance of beating anyone else in this dreadful division. But the Klitschkos? They'll knock the cornrows right off your head, and you know it.

So the goal is to never have to fight the Klitschkos, but somehow create the impression that it's the Klitschkos who don't want to fight you. In order to pull that off, you need a well-thought-out, intricate, multi-pronged plan. You need to plot it out three moves ahead like some kind of pugilistic Bond villain. Just call Haye "Dr. No-Fight." Or, through the eyes of the screwed-over Klitschkos, "Auric Middlefinger."

So here's what Haye did: He called out both Klitschkos, trash-talked them as if his soul had been inhabited by an unfunny version of Don Rickles, made up a T-shirt that really shouldn't have been that offensive (but apparently the Klitschkos are uptight about decapitation), and signed to fight Wladimir in June. Then he withdrew on two weeks' notice. So Vitali stepped in and negotiated to fight Haye in September. But while Team Klitschko thought the fight was a done deal, Haye snuck out the back door and signed to fight Nicolay Valuev instead.

Now here's what Haye has: a legitimately winnable fight against a wookie who moves like rigor mortis has set

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Machiavellian duo: Haye and Booth

The Monthly Mailbagg

This month, the Mailbagg is like Pongsaklek Wonjongkam dipped in honey. In other words, short and sweet:

Baggasaurus,

Got a quick question for you: You analyzed all the TV boxing commentators a while back, but that was before Gus Johnson came along. What do you think of him so far? I never thought I'd say this, but I really miss Steve Albert.

Dave W.
Portland, OR

Dave,

Since the Baggmanitarian is an open-minded kind of guy, he wanted to give Johnson a few broadcasts before jumping to any conclusions. But it's been a few broadcasts, and it's time to jump. And the guy pretty much sucks. He sounds like a UFC broadcaster—over hyping, constantly selling the product, trying too hard to make the fights seem exciting instead of just letting them *be* exciting.

His worst moment so far came after the Timothy Bradley-Nate Campbell controversy, when Gary Shaw and Don King were bickering in the ring about a possible rematch. As they cut away from the interview, Johnson guffawed, "That's why we love boxing, because of the characters." No, Gus, that's why people who don't love boxing ridicule it and don't take it seriously. Great fights and brave fighters are why *we* love boxing. If you think Shaw and King are why people are fight fans, then clearly you're not a fan, and that's a problem Showtime ought to be thinking long and hard about.

in, an alphabet belt if he does beat Valuev, and a free pass to keep calling out the Klitschkos even though there's a 98-percent chance they'll never want to waste their time negotiating with him again. Maybe one of the Klitschkos, desperately in need of a marketable fight, will call Haye's bluff and agree to fight him. But most likely, he can enjoy several years of claiming that the Ukrainian bros are ducking him.

Look, Haye is no dummy. He realizes his excellent heavyweight hand speed and shaky chin suit him well against the most lumbering oaf he can find, someone he can hit who won't be able to hit him back. Wladimir is kind of a lumbering oaf. Vitali is a bit more lumbering and oaf-ish. But they're nothing compared to Valuev, who was born high up on a beanstalk to parents named "Lumber" and "Oaf."

Haye will beat Valuev, then he'll claim to want the Klitschkos, but they'll both tell him, in any number of the 37 languages they speak, to buzz off. And Haye will be able to claim they're afraid of him, even though it's actually the other way around.

Call David Haye whatever names you want. But the Baggerfly is calling him an evil genius.

And The Stingray Goes To ...

It was a tough call this month, with Tyrone Harris upending Marvin Quintero on *ShoBox*, Demetrius King knocking out previously unbeaten heavyweight Bowie Tupou, and barely-.500 Rey Migreno shocking Ratanapol Vorapin in the Thai city of Phuket (which is apparently exactly what Ratanapol said after suffering the defeat). But in the end, Baggnum P.I. is giving the award for excellence by an "opponent" to Jose Angel Beranza, a tough 33-year-old Mexican trialhorse who'd lost six of his previous seven before whooping up on hot prospect Juan Carlos Velasquez over six rounds in an ESPN2-televised upset.

Velasquez was 9-0 (5) and one half of a twin-brother tandem with big-time hopes. But now brother Carlos (what unfit parent names their twins "Carlos" and "Juan Carlos"?) is left alone among the unbeatens, thanks to the determination of Beranza. He knocked the Puerto Rican prospect down twice in the third round, hurt him again in the fifth, and won a unanimous decision. Beranza was brought in to go rounds, not to win rounds. He gave Velasquez the valuable experience he needed—and then some. And he not only raises his record to 32-15-2 (25), he also bags a Stingray.

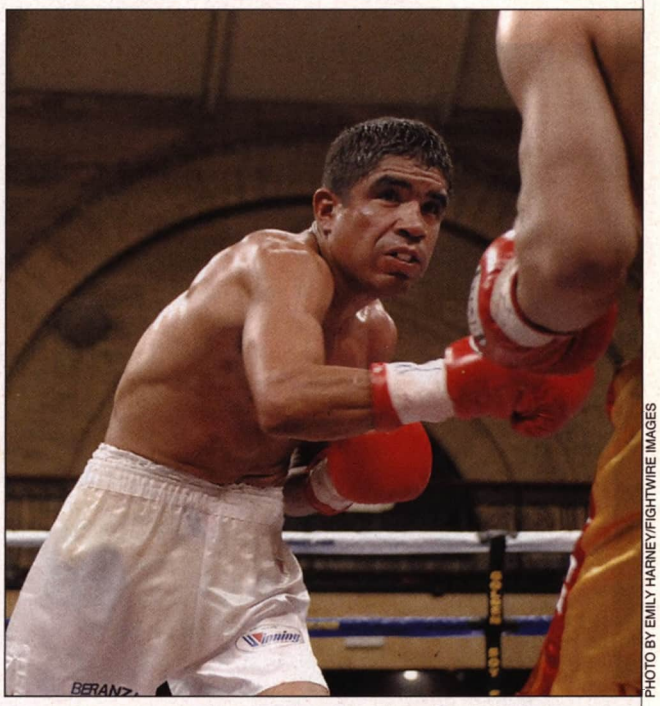


PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Beranza: Latest "Stingray" recipient

And remember, Jose, just send the Baggnanimous an e-mail with your mailing address and you (along with all past Stingray winners) can claim your Stingray certificate. No guarantees, however, that the award will be free of beer stains. ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com.

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 114, Blue Bell, PA 19422.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Captain Who?

Do we really have to start referring to Roy Jones as "Captain Hook" now?

AARON S. BAYLEY
Toronto, ON

Gone But Never Forgotten

Arturo Gatti was a true champion—the people's champion—and a fighter that created a buzz like no other. Nobody fought with more heart and determination that Gatti, and nobody had more passionate fans than Arturo. He made people shake their heads in utter amazement at the inordinate amount of punishment he was able to endure. When you went to a Gatti fight, you got your money's worth and then some. He never cheated himself or his fans, and that is why we loved him so much and why we feel such shock and sadness over his horrible and tragic passing. We will never forget the thrills Arturo gave us. He will be sorely missed.

KEVIN POORMAN
Pasadena, MD

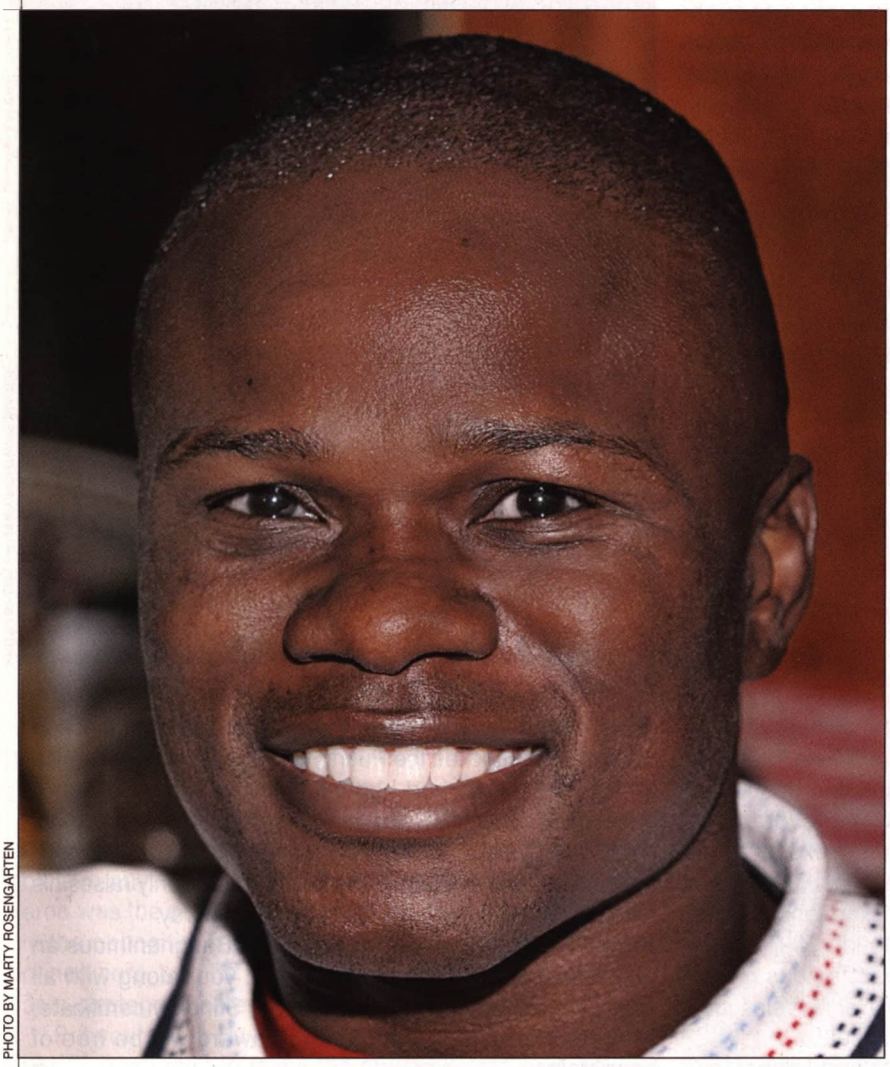


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

The murder of former welterweight champion Vernon Forrest was just the latest in a string of tragedies that have rocked the boxing world. Reader Peter Santiago was among the many who wrote to express his grief and pay tribute to "The Viper."

Death Of A Class Act

I want to send my condolences to the Forrest family for the untimely death of Vernon Forrest. I had the opportunity to watch Vernon fight and have to say that he was a class act in and out of the ring. I hope that those that are responsible for his death are brought to justice. Thank you, Vernon, for the way you carried yourself as a fighter and I hope others follow in your footsteps.

PETER SANTIAGO
Manassas, VA

Easy Way Out

Nate Campbell knew he was outclassed and finished at the end of the third round against Timothy Bradley, cut or no cut. But because of the fact that there was a cut, Campbell realized a no-decision would look a whole lot better than another loss on his record. He quit because he was beaten. Bradley hit the mark when he said that Campbell was getting older by the minute. True fighters and honest people are a dying breed in boxing.

RICHARD REYES
27_rarereyes@att.net

Move Over, Sugar Ray

Manny Pacquiao is the greatest ever! I've seen them all, from the 1940s on. I used to listen to all Joe Louis'

fights on radio, then saw him and all the great fighters before and after on film, TV, or in person. I've always said Sugar Ray Robinson was the best, having seen him in his prime. But after the kayo of Ricky Hatton, I now consider Pacquiao the greatest of all-time for his speed, power, aggressiveness, and willingness to take on all comers one after another. Moreover, let's not forget his character and sportsmanship.

But I want to comment on what Eric Raskin wrote in the September issue of THE RING: That some observers think Pac-Man should be 0-2 or 0-1-1 against Juan Manuel Marquez. Not so, for the simple reason that one of the judges only gave Manny a 10-7 score for three knockdowns in round one of their first fight. If you win the round, which Pacquiao certainly did, then the first knockdown gives him a 10-8 score, the second 10-7, and the third 10-6. That would have been enough to give Manny the decision.

DICK SHELLEY
Tyrone, GA

PHOTO BY DON EMMERT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Floyd Mayweather indulges in some trash talk during the media tour to hype his fight with Oscar De La Hoya. Reader Aaron Morgan believes that many people underrate Mayweather because they dislike his personality.

Buddy System

Is it me or is Buddy McGirt stopping way too many fights? Every time he is in the corner, all I see are gold chains and big rings. I don't even think he's watching the fight through his dark shades. He's probably looking at his Rolex because he's late for some other payday. Maybe McGirt should go back to what worked when he first started, and actually try to do something for his guy other than stop the fight. Every round I wait to see him up on the apron with a towel in his hand. How anyone thinks he's one of the best trainers in the world is beyond me.

STEVE KODIAK
Prince George, BC

Under Or Over

I think that the dislike for Floyd Mayweather's personality is starting to cloud not only fans judgment of him as a fighter, but also the media's. You don't have to like a fighter to recognize his skills, and anyone with a set of eyes can see Floyd's skills. People are trying so hard to prove that Mayweather is overrated that the question must now be: Is he underrated?

AARON MORGAN
London, England

The Baddest Brothers On The Planet

I just read "Wladimir Klitschko Crowned THE RING Champ" by Brian Doogan in the September 2009 issue. What a great story. Congratulation to Waldimir for winning the most coveted prize in all sports, and brother Vitali, too, for his number-one heavyweight ranking. The Klitschko brothers bring a breath of fresh air and a new attitude to the sport. When was the last time a boxing match filled a 60,000–seat stadium?

STEVEN T. LEVANDOSKY
Finleyville, PA

Warriors Or Whiners?

There was a time in my career as a fight fan (some 50 years) when fighters very seldom missed a scheduled fight because of injuries. It seems times have changed. I don't think any of us know for sure whether these injury-induced postponements and cancellations are legitimate or spurious, but they seem to be happening more often. I refer to the recent examples of David Haye pulling out of the Wladimir Klitschko fight and Floyd Mayweather pushing back the Juan Manuel Marquez contest. I can't image pros like Sugar Ray Robinson or Archie Moore, who each had well over 100 professional fights, postponing a match unless there was a compelling reason.

JOE THOMPSON
Charlotte, NC ■

[Looking Ahead]

By Don Stradley

A Lot At Stake In Dawson-Johnson II

The first time **Chad Dawson** and **Glen Johnson** fought, fans were treated to a competitive battle that was up for grabs until the final bell. Johnson staggered the much younger Dawson more than once, while Dawson was busier and landed more colorful combinations. The judges apparently favored Dawson's flash, for when the scorecards were turned in it was Dawson's hand that was raised. The two fighters will meet again on the November 7 edition of HBO's *World Championship Boxing*.

The rematch, promoted by the triumvirate of Gary Shaw Productions, DiBella Entertainment, and Seminole Warriors Boxing, will take place in Hartford, Connecticut's XL Center. Dawson happens to be from nearby New Haven, but former champion Johnson has made a career out of fighting in enemy territory.

Johnson, 49-12-2 (33), and Dawson, 28-0 (17), may need each other, for they haven't created any noticeable fireworks with anyone else. Since their April 2008 meeting, Dawson was less than spectacular in winning two decisions over **Antonio Tarver**, while 40-year-old Johnson won two bouts in a workmanlike manner, stopping **Aaron Norwood** in four, and avenging an earlier draw by outpointing **Daniel Judah**. Johnson and Dawson made for a compelling fight, though, and a return pairing should be equally entertaining.

The winner of Dawson-Johnson II may be THE RING's next light heavyweight champion. It all depends on the actions of that old rogue **Bernard Hopkins**, who is currently rated as THE RING's number one light heavyweight.

Hopkins last fought October 18, 2008. Unless he signs for a light heavyweight fight by October 18 of this year, or within a couple of days of that date, he will be removed from his top spot in our ratings. This will shift Dawson and Johnson to number one and two respectively. Hence, Dawson-Johnson II would be for a championship that has been vacant since the retirement of **Joe Calzaghe**.

However, should Hopkins sign for a light heavyweight fight by that time, he'll keep his rating and Dawson-Johnson II will not be for THE RING's championship. (The WBC has sanctioned Dawson-Johnson II as being for an "interim" light heavyweight title.) Ironically, Hopkins declared on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* that he was hoping to fight the winner of Dawson-Johnson II. According to ESPN.com, Golden Boy Promotions CEO **Richard Schaefer** said Hopkins wanted to fight near his 45th birthday in January, which would make a bout with the winner of November's Dawson-Johnson clash unlikely.

Adding to the intrigue is Hopkins' interest in cruiserweight champion **Tomasz Adamek**, a bout that HBO and Adamek's promoter are behind. All that's holding it up is HBO's initial licensing fee, which ESPN.com reported was less than everyone expected. Meanwhile, Adamek signed to fight fellow Polish star **Andrew Golota** on October 24, in Lodz, Poland.

Ultimately, Hopkins has an eye on the history books, so he may eventually pursue the cruiserweight championship—it would make him a three-division champion. But a lot depends on whether Adamek-Golota actually takes place, and if it does, what happens.

Listen Up

Junior middleweights **"Lightning" Harry Joe Yorgey**, 22-0-1 (10), and **Alfredo "Perro" Angulo**, 16-1 (13), will meet in the televised opener of Dawson-Johnson II. Yorgey is coming off a kayo win over the previously undefeated **Ronald Hearns**. Meanwhile, Angulo scored a two-round stoppage of **Gabriel Rosado** on August 7. Rosado was a relatively soft touch for Angulo, who needed a confidence builder after losing a decision to **Kermit Cintron**. Yorgey, a strong fighter who beats opponents by outworking them, will provide a much rougher night for Angulo. Yorgey's toughness is unquestionable; he suffered a shattered jaw in a 2004 bout with **Larry Brothers** at Philadelphia's Blue Horizon, yet managed to hang on to win on points … **Cristobal Cruz**, 39-11-1 (23), is scheduled to put the IBF featherweight title on the line against **Ricardo Castillo**, 38-7 (25). That one takes place on October 17, in Chiapas, Mexico at the Palenque de Gallos. Ricardo is the brother of former lightweight champion **Jose Luis Castillo**. ■

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Johnson and Dawson II could be fighting for more than just an "interim" alphabet belt

POR LOS QUE SE ATREVEN A SUBIR AL RING

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